



Joint  
Advanced  
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Program

INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES

**Proceedings of the International  
Symposium on the Dynamics and  
Structures of Terrorist Threats in Southeast  
Asia, Held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

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## **PREFACE**

This paper presents the Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Dynamics and Structure of Terrorist Threats in Southeast Asia held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 18–20 April 2005. The Symposium was jointly organized by the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), the Joint Interagency Coordination Group for Counterterrorism (JIACG/CT) of the United States Pacific Command (PACOM), and the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA). The Symposium was part of an Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) effort for the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) with the objective of providing analytical support to the Defense Policy Analysis Office (DPAO) to assist in that entity's performance of long-range planning.

The authors would like to thank the reviewers, Mr. Mark Stout and Mr. Michael Pease of IDA.



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Southeast Asia is widely recognized as the crucial “second front” in the global war on terror, but the nature of the terrorist threat in this region is more complex than this characterization implies. There has been a tendency to treat terrorist activity in the region as derivative of terrorist ideologies and movements in the Arab Middle East and South Asia. In reality, most of the conflicts and socio-economic tensions that have spurred terrorist activity in Southeast Asia have deep local, historical roots. In short, al-Qaida did not create the terrorist movements that threaten Southeast Asia, but it has found valuable operational and ideological allies among existing militant organizations in the region. The regional and local militant groups currently operating in Southeast Asia are, however, entities with their own distinct ideologies and political agendas and do not, for the most part, subordinate their goals to those of the global jihadist movement led by al-Qaida.

In an effort to better understand the nature of the terrorist threat in Southeast Asia and its importance to the overall global war on terror, the Institute for Defense Analyses, the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism, and the United States Pacific Command’s Joint Interagency Coordination Group for Counterterrorism co-hosted an international conference on “The Dynamics and Structure of Terrorist Threats in Southeast Asia” in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 18–20 April 2005. The conference brought together academics, journalists, government experts, and military and law enforcement officers from across the region. The initial goals of the conference were threefold:

1. To lay the groundwork for establishing working relationships with scholars, analysts, journalists, and others with expertise in a variety of fields related to terrorism and political violence in the Southeast Asian region.
2. To explore the possibilities of establishing more formal cooperative and collaborative links between academic, analytical, and government institutions dealing with the problem of countering terrorism and extremist political violence.
3. To bring the broadest possible spectrum of knowledge and experience to bear on the problem to the mutual benefit of all the institutions involved.

The conference was organized into three thematic sessions: The Landscape of the Terrorist Threat in Southeast Asia, Leadership Dynamics in Terrorist Organizations, and Radicalization of Political Islam in Southeast Asia.

### **The Landscape of the Terrorist Threat in Southeast Asia**

This session sought to define the broad outlines of the landscape of the terrorist threat at the present time, to begin to understand how it is changing in response to the stresses and pressures created by the war on terrorism, and to consider options for governments to begin to change how they view and respond to the threat from violent political extremism. Four key themes emerged:

- It is difficult to describe a single threat “landscape” in Southeast Asia, but some important patterns have emerged among militant movements across the region: a growing commitment to using terrorist violence to challenge the status quo; a tendency among long-standing ethnic and regional separatist movements to take on a militant religious dimension; and a dramatic increase in the skill with which militant groups use and manipulate the media.
- The nature of the terrorist threat is constantly changing, and terrorist groups are evolving rapidly in response to the success of the campaign against terrorist leaders and networks.
- The United States is falling behind in its public diplomacy campaign in the region, although its tsunami relief efforts bought it considerable goodwill. However, the perception is still widespread that the US is hostile to Islam.
- Resolving long-standing regional conflicts would go far toward neutralizing the festering discontent that feeds terrorist ideologies.

### **Leadership Dynamics in Terrorist Organizations**

This session focused on three questions: What are the most important characteristics of effective terrorist leaders? What have we learned from arrests of high-level terrorist leaders in Southeast Asia since 9/11? And what are the distinctive characteristics of leadership structures in various terrorist organizations? While the nature and style of leadership varies from group to group, two important insights emerged:

- The iconic leaders of terrorist organizations and cells provide the ideological and motivational centers-of-gravity for their groups, and changes in leadership can lead to significant shifts in ideology and objectives. The most effective terrorist leaders combine attributes of personal charisma, religious training,

and operational experience (often in Afghanistan). The emerging generation of younger terrorist leaders is becoming more religiously radicalized.

- The interdiction phase of the global war on terror has significantly disrupted leadership structures in most terrorist organizations. In most cases, initiative has been forced further down the leadership hierarchy, resulting in a more diffused threat.

### **Radicalization of Political Islam in Southeast Asia**

The final session of the conference tackled three important questions: Is political Islam in Southeast Asia becoming more radical and more militant? Are terrorist groups in the region signing on to al-Qaida's global khalifist ideology? What mechanisms are most important in promoting radicalization? Several important insights into these questions emerged:

- While conflicts in the region have taken on more overtly sectarian dimensions in recent years, shifts in popular support for radical political agendas seem not to be durable. Instead, public opinion is extremely sensitive to regional and international events: support for radical ideologies (especially anti-Americanism) increases with negative news from the Middle East (the Abu Ghraib scandal, for example) but can dramatically decrease in response to local events, such as the dramatic US tsunami-relief response.
- Increased operational cooperation between regional groups and al-Qaida has not, thus far, translated into ideological unity and a single, global political agenda. Most local and regional radical and militant groups in Southeast Asia are holding to their historic, largely nationalist political agendas.
- The key to slowing and reversing trends toward militant cultures of hate lies in understanding how individuals make the shift from ideological radicalism to violent militancy. The West has overemphasized the role of radical madrassas in creating militants and terrorists. More important to long-term success in shrinking the terrorist recruiting base is developing a much more sophisticated understanding of the small group dynamics that drive terrorist recruiting.
- Militancy feeds on binary worldviews that promote hatred and intolerance: Us vs. them, Islam vs. the West, Good vs. Evil. Undermining these worldviews will depend, in part, on the ability of the United States and its regional

partners to develop definitions of the threat and counter-terrorism concepts that downplay the religious dimension and focus on identifying and resolving root causes.

### **Toward Cooperative Analysis and Capability-Building**

In the interest of building truly cooperative, international counter-terrorism approaches, the participants in the Kuala Lumpur conference agreed to form a Steering Committee to create a Council for Asian Terrorism Research (CATR). The guiding principle of the council will be to transform the diversity of perspectives on the problem of terrorism and militancy into a great strength in devising new approaches, building new capabilities, and building a global anti-terrorist environment. The purpose of the Council is to promote regional regional research on terrorism and counter-terrorism, drawing equally on unique strengths and perspectives of each nation in the region. The goal is to cast the broadest possible methodological net to find knowledge and expertise that might contribute to understanding and responding effectively to the factors and environments that give rise to violent extremism. The Council will provide formal mechanisms to promote lively, interdisciplinary discussion of terrorism and counter-terrorism among scholars, government officials, policy analysts, religious leaders, and law-enforcement professionals.

The primary mechanism for facilitating discussion and knowledge exchange will be biannual conferences and workshops to address key trends and share information, study findings, and individual insights as well as to identify topics and themes for future research. IDA, as the institutional representative of the United States, intends to play a facilitating rather than a guiding role, preferring that the Southeast Asian member institutions define the analytical agenda. These conferences will produce papers, publications, and policy briefs for dissemination to policy makers and government leaders to influence Track 1 decision-making throughout the region. The ultimate goal, however, is to foster informal relationships among all those in academe, government the military, the media, religious establishments and schools, private research and philanthropic institutions, and non-government organizations in the region who think about, research, and worry about these problems. Such relationships will, we hope, promote on-going communication, dialog, and information sharing and cooperative policy-making on these important issues.

## INTRODUCTION

This Conference on the Landscape of the Terrorist Threat in Southeast Asia began as the third in a series of IDA Conferences dealing with important regional security challenges.<sup>1</sup> The initial goal was to assemble the foremost scholars of Southeast Asia to gather their views and facilitate a discussion of the nature and scope of the terrorist threat in that region. Early in the planning stages, IDA joined forces with the United States Pacific Command's JIASG/CT, which has been working for several years to establish a robust cooperative outreach program with counter-terrorism research center in the Southeast Asian region. One of the most important of these new research institutions is the Southeast Asian Centre for Counter-Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which has since its inception in 2003 worked to build cooperative academic, analytical, and operational approaches in the region.

Together, IDA, USPACOM, and the SEARCCT assembled an impressive line-up of scholars, analysts, journalists, and government, military, and law-enforcement officials who met on 18-19 April in Kuala Lumpur. The initial goals of the conference were threefold:

1. To lay the groundwork for establishing working relationships with scholars, analysts, journalists, and others with expertise in a variety of fields related to terrorism and political violence in the Southeast Asian region.
2. To explore the possibilities of establishing more formal cooperative and collaborative links between academic, analytical, and government institutions dealing with the problem of countering terrorism and extremist political violence.
3. To bring the broadest possible spectrum of knowledge and experience to bear on the problem to the mutual benefit of all the institutions involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Katy Oh Hassig, et al., North Korean Elites; Caroline Ziemke et al., Iran

The US delegation had the additional goal of listening to the views and insights of our Southeast Asian partners in order to better understand how they view the challenges, where they believe the greatest problems lie, and what they see as the most pressing steps for solving them.

This document presents the full proceedings of the conference. It includes ten formal papers commissioned by IDA for the conference as well as summaries of discussions and the deliberations of two Roundtable Working Groups. The papers are divided into three chapters that correspond to the formal sessions during the Kuala Lumpur Conference. Part I, “The Landscape of the Terrorist Threat,” sets the broad stage for the rest of the conference with three papers dealing with the scope of terrorist activity in Southeast Asia, and the links between regional terrorist and radical groups and broader international movements. Part II, “Leadership Dynamics in Terrorist Organizations,” consists of three papers exploring the constantly shifting nature of terrorist organizations and, in particular, their leadership structures and relationships. The four papers that make up Part III, “Radicalization of Political Islam in Southeast Asia,” explore two of the most pressing concerns in the region: to what extent have local political agendas in Southeast Asia been coopted by the global or regional violent jihadist ideologies, and what are the mechanisms and institutions that promote radicalization in the region? Part IV consists of three parts: a summary of the two working group discussions dealing with building cooperative research approaches and relationships for counter-terrorism in Southeast Asia, a set of themes for exploration and analysis in future conferences and research, and a way forward for building more formal cooperative structures in the region.

## **PART I**

### **THE LANDSCAPE OF THE TERRORIST THREAT**





## THE LANDSCAPE OF THE TERRORIST THREAT

### Summary of Discussions

The goal of this session was threefold: to determine, as far as possible, the broad outlines of the landscape of the terrorist threat at the present time, to begin to understand how it is changing in response to the stresses and pressures created by the war on terrorism, and to consider options for governments to begin to change how they view and respond to the threat from violent political extremism. The discussion raised a series of important issues.

First, it is difficult to talk about a single “landscape” of the terrorist threat, even within Southeast Asia although there are some important commonalities. First, there seems to be the consistent commitment among militant groups of various religious, political, and ideological persuasions, to challenge the status quo through acts of violence aimed either at civilians or at national or foreign economic interests (such as hotels, airlines, and financial institutions). Second, groups that have long existed as ethno-national or regional separatist movements have, in recent years, taken on a newly vehement religious dimension. It is seldom clear to what degree these “conversions” are genuine and to what degree they are intended to manipulate the rising religious consciousness of the current era of religious revivalism and mobilize it to political (or criminal) ends. What is clear is that the religious zeal of newly awakened young people, especially those suffering from political or economic deprivation, is a valuable recruiting and indoctrination tool for violent militant organizations and one they manipulate with great skill in ways that will be explored in more depth in Part III. Third, in their effort to challenge the status quo and garner social support and recruits, these militant groups have been extremely effective in conducting their own “strategic communication” campaigns – more effective, in fact, than any of the dozens of governments arrayed against them. Following the lead (and sometimes the boiler plate) of al-Qaida, local and regional groups use the media, pamphlets, videos tapes, and social philanthropy, and small-study and discussion groups to spread their word and propagate the view that the Muslim world is under attack by the United States, Israel, and secular Muslim governments.

A second important issue raised in the discussions was the constantly changing nature of the terrorist threat. It is true that the United States and its counter-terrorism partners have made considerable progress in arresting, killing, or otherwise neutralizing a

substantial portion of the known leadership in groups like al-Qaida and Jemaah Islamiyya. It is also clear that this interdiction approach is not shutting down the ability of these groups to carry out violent terrorist attacks and will not, alone, be an adequate long-term solution. These organizations operate under flexible operational doctrines and leadership structures that seem to be able to shift directions relatively quickly when faced with leadership losses. It is increasingly in the nature of the new terrorism to let religious and ideological zeal create a “free enterprise” system of political violence, with initiative becoming more and more entrepreneurial as it is pushed down through the terrorist networks.

The third crucial point raised was the absolutely urgent need for the United States to build a coherent strategic communication strategy that is capable of countering the growing perception in the Muslim world that the West is at war with Islam. Messages, add campaigns, interviews on al-Jazeera, textbooks in Muslim schools, and pro-American radio and television in local markets is simply not enough. The US and its allies must back up positive, religiously conciliatory language with appropriate actions. The US humanitarian response to the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia bought it a tremendous amount of goodwill. Positive perceptions of the US in Indonesia, for example, bounded from a dismal 10-15% to nearly 50% almost overnight. It was the method, as much as the fact of US aid that did the trick. US military forces went in, distributed aid, evacuated the sick and wounded, and left. They did not take the opportunity, while in terrorist-ridden Aceh, to look for or apprehend terrorists or attack terrorist strongholds. The message was not wasted on the population. But the good will could be wasted if the US does not follow up its altruistic show in the aftermath of tragedy with a religiously-neutral counter terrorism strategy that draws the clear distinction between those who non-violent religious reform movements that seek to live their lives strictly according to their religious laws and values and those who use religious zeal as an excuse to political violence. United States counter-terrorism strategy must respect and even enlist the former in the battle against the latter.

Finally, it is past time to start dealing seriously with the roots causes that give rise to the discontent that feeds violent militancy and terrorism. Much of the violence in the Southeast Asian region stems from long-standing local and regional conflicts, usually over disputed territory or political and cultural autonomy. For the US and regional nations to come together to find peaceful ways of resolving those conflicts and monitoring peace agreements would go a long way toward reducing the operational space

of violent militant groups. Unlike other parts of the Muslim world, poverty and economic deprivation remain important forces facilitating the spread of violent militant ideologies and sympathies in Southeast Asia. Countries like the Philippines and Thailand have, in the past, undertaken regional economic development programs in their separatist provinces in pursuit of peace agreements. Unfortunately, the Asian economic crisis on 1997 put most of those programs on hold. A way should be found to revive them, for herein lies another potentially valuable means of reconciliation. All of these steps can help shift the center-of-gravity in the counter-terrorism campaign from interdiction to prevention. Such efforts will, in the long run, be a more effective form of “strategic communication” than any add campaign in convincing Southeast Asia’s Muslims that the US is not at war with Islam and that the United States can be a positive force for good and progress in their worlds and do so in a way that does not rob them of their unique aspirations, cultures, and identities.

Rohan Gunaratna traces the history and transformation of al-Qaida’s links to terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia and argues that those links are part of a comprehensive strategy that ties directly into the global jihadi strategy of Usama bin Laden. Al-Qaida is capitalizing on its connections to existing local and regional groups to build an operational and ideological network and expand its base of operations in the region. The post-9/11 environment, and particularly the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, facilitated al-Qaida’s regional strategy by encouraging the rise of new groups, re-orienting the ideologies of existing groups in a more global, pan-Islamist direction, and undermining public support for the US and its global war on terror. The governments of Southeast Asia have made important strides in uncovering and undermining al-Qaida’s links in the region, particularly since Singapore uncovered the plot to bomb US, British, Australian, and Israeli diplomatic and commercial targets in late 2001. There is an urgent need, however, for greater tactical and strategic cooperation between the nations of the region. The United States must also expand its cooperative relationships in the region, but must do so in a way that does not subordinate the threats, concerns, and political sensitivities of Southeast Asian nations to its own “global war on terror.” The current threat from al-Qaida and affiliated organizations is, Gunaratna warns, daunting. It exists and operates at various levels. The nations of Southeast Asia must pool their resources to develop an effective and flexible counter-terrorism strategy that looks beyond short-term interdiction toward long-term solutions.

Ranga Kalansooriya uses the Sri Lankan group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), to illustrate the unique challenges that the Southeast Asian region faces in dealing with the threat from terrorist organizations. The challenge of responding to the rise of regional cooperation between terrorist groups is, Kalansooriya, complicated by the nature of the security environment in the region. ASEAN's "Asian way" of dealing with common threats through consensus-building and non-interference in the internal policies of member nations, suits the regional security culture but is time-consuming and favors the terrorists. This threat, Kalansooriya shows, marks a fundamental departure from the region's past militant groups, which tended to stay operationally and politically isolated and did not have a global terrorist network like al-Qaida in which to tap. Countries of Southeast Asia, like the United States, are facing a new threat with which they have little experience – violent political movements, radicalized by militant ethno-religious ideologies that operate internationally through complex and adaptive networks. Responding to this threat will, Kalansooriya concludes, require the nations of the region to establish their own well-networked approaches that draw on all the government, academic, and other resources of Southeast Asia to develop cooperative approaches to analyzing and assessing the threat and building new counter-terror capabilities.

Journalist Maria Ressa focuses on the operational and ideological links between al-Qaida and regional terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia. Although 9/11 marks a conceptual turning point in the global war on terror for both the United States and the nations of Southeast Asia, in reality, according to Ressa, it merely exposed a pattern in the development of global terrorist networks that was well underway. She focuses on JI's links with the MILF in the Philippines to demonstrate how al-Qaida is forging close operational and personal links with regional militant groups in an effort to hijack them into its own global jihad. Moreover, she warns, al-Qaida is proceeding according to a strategy based on a sophisticated knowledge of the internal faultlines in Muslim societies, the use of religion as a means to gain political and strategic power, and an impressive grasp of public opinion and strategic communication. As a result, al-Qaida is transforming local separatist and nationalist movements by importing new, more sophisticated terrorist technologies, radicalizing the agendas and memberships of local organizations, and undermining regional and national peacemaking efforts.

## **Post 9/11 Terrorism Landscape in Southeast Asia – The Threat and Response**

Rohan Gunaratna

### **Introduction:**

The Southeast Asian terrorism landscape has undergone profound change after the US-led global coalition's intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001 and the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003. A review of the post-9/11 threat in Southeast Asia reveals that the Al Qaeda-spearheaded global jihad movement has been able to successfully influence both the Islamist and the Muslim groups in Southeast Asia. The threat is recurrent. While under one percent of the madaris<sup>1</sup> preach violent jihad, well entrenched training camps in the southern Philippines and makeshift training facilities elsewhere in the region train the radicalized recruits. The loss of Afghanistan is adequately compensated by the new developments in the region. Government failure to criminalize terrorist groups and their support structures and dismantle the centers of ideological indoctrination and training facilities enable terrorist capacity to replenish the human losses and the material wastage. After Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, transformed from a dictatorship into a democracy in 1998, the existing Islamist groups have become stronger and several new groups have emerged.

As the self proclaimed “pioneering vanguard of the Islamic movement,” Al Qaeda has instilled its vision and mission of a global jihad on the disparate local Islamist terrorist and guerrilla groups in the region.<sup>2</sup> The “Al Qaeda effect” on local jihad groups is best exemplified by examining the targeting trajectory of Southeast Asian groups. After 9/11, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) has attacked and is preparing to attack predominantly targets of the West, its allies and friends in Southeast Asia. Although JI was specifically established to create an Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia, an Al Qaeda-supported JI poses a much greater threat to Western targets in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, an

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<sup>1</sup> Islamic schools are known as pesantarans in Indonesia, Pondok in southern Thailand and madarashs elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Abdullah Azzam, *Al Qaeda Al Sulbah, Al Jihad, Maktab-il-khidamat*, Pershawah, 1988. The founding charter of Al Qaeda was translated from Arabic to English by Dr Reuven Paz immediately after September 2001.

experienced JI has partially taken over the traditional role of Al Qaeda by providing the training and operational guidance to several groups.

Al Qaeda's strategy in Southeast Asia is no different than its global strategy. Since its origins, Al Qaeda always wanted to inspire and instigate like-minded Islamist groups. After Al Qaeda attacked America's most iconic landmarks, Al Qaeda became the most hunted group in history. To fight back, a weakened Al Qaeda is relying heavily on local Islamist groups worldwide including its Southeast Asian counterparts. This paper will examine the threat posed by Southeast Asian groups that are operationally and ideologically linked to Al Qaeda, the current and future threat posed by Southeast Asian Islamist groups, and some recommendations for managing the threat.

### **The Context:**

A range of Southeast Asian groups target civilians to achieve their political objectives. In Southeast Asia, the terrorist threat primarily stems from three categories of groups:

1. The Al Qaeda organization led by Osama bin Laden and its operationally associated Southeast Asian Islamist groups, mainly Jemaah Islamiyah (JI: Islamic Group), Laskar Jundullah, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Rajah Sulaiman Revolutionary Movement (RSRM), and the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM).
2. Muslim nationalist groups operationally independent and ideologically unconnected to Al Qaeda, mainly the Free Aceh Movement (GAM: Gerakan Aceh Merdeka) and Laskar Jihad, Indonesia, and the National Revolutionary Front Coordination (BRN-coordinate: Barisan Revolusi Nasional Coordinate), New Pattani United Liberation Organization (New PULO), and Pattani Mujahidin (GMIP: Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani).<sup>3</sup>
3. Non-Islamist and non-Muslim groups, mainly the New Peoples Army (NPA), Philippines and Free Papua Organisation (OPM: Organisasi Papua Merdeka), Indonesia.

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<sup>3</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, Sabrina Chua, Arabinda Acharya, "Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand" (Singapore, Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005)

As governments cooperate, so terrorist groups cooperate. There are linkages between groups in categories one and two. Some of the groups in category two have received training by combat tacticians and experts from the groups that belong to category one. In the Southern Philippines, of foreign nationals trained in MILF camps two percent came from the South of Thailand.<sup>4</sup> Some of the groups in categories one, two and three cooperate. In Poso, Indonesia, Laskar Jihad, an Islamist group fighting against radical Christian groups - such as Laskar Kristus – work together with Laskar Jundullah and other constituent groups of the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Mujahidin Council of Indonesia). In the Southern Philippines, MILF, ASG and NPA have engaged in tactical cooperation. Although MILF and ASG are politico-religious in ideology and distinct from the left wing NPA, they have at times worked together on the ground. To fight a common enemy – the Armed forces of the Philippines – ideologically diverse groups tend to cooperate. Such cooperation cannot be strategic, however.

### **Background:**

After having played a pivotal role in the defeat of the world's largest land army, the Soviet army, the Arab muhahidin led by Dr Abdullah Azzam and his protégé Osama bin Laden created Al Qaeda al Sulbah (The Base) to preserve and harness that force. Throughout the 1990s, Al Qaeda played a very significant role in assisting Islamist and Muslim groups throughout the world, including in Southeast Asia. As Al Qaeda managed the financial pipeline and training camps it inherited from the anti-Soviet campaign, Bin Laden was able to provide both ideological and strategic direction to the disparate Islamist groups worldwide. As Al Qaeda grew in strength, size and influence, the group was determined to reach out to Muslims worldwide directly and through their organizations. To co-opt and consolidate its sustained training and financial assistance to Islamist groups worldwide, Al Qaeda created its alliance – the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and the Crusaders in February 1998.

The Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and Caucasian Groups within Al Qaeda's ideological orbit of global jihad that received its past support now seeks to emulate Al Qaeda operationally and ideologically. To demonstrate allegiance to Al Qaeda and its

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<sup>4</sup> Wei Meng Yeo, Statistical analysis of foreigners in the Southern Philippines by nationality from 1994-2003, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) – Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore, 2004.

ideology and leadership, JI has conducted or supported coordinated simultaneous or singular mass fatality bombings including suicide attacks, the hallmark of Al Qaeda attacks. In Southeast Asia, the bombing of night clubs in Bali and the US consulate in Denpasar in October 2002 remains the world's worst terrorist attack since 9/11. Similarly, the bombing of Superferry 14 in Manila in February 2003 remains the world's worst maritime terrorist attack. As the intentions and capabilities of terrorist groups seeking to target Western interests and local government targets in Southeast Asia have not diminished, the region is likely to suffer from more attacks in the foreseeable future. Most Southeast Asian governments are weak, corrupt, incompetent, and their leaders lack the political vision, will, and the capital to develop the necessary legislation, structures and processes to combat extremism and its vicious by-product terrorism.

### **Threat Transformation:**

How has the Southeast Asian environment changed during the last decade? The threat environment in Southeast Asia is diffused and dispersed. The post 9/11 highly charged political environment is creating new groups and existing groups are becoming stronger. Despite their differences, they are willing to work together, most visibly between JI, ASG, RSRG, and to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – Special Operations Group (MILF-SOG). The region continues to witness several attacks on high profile, symbolic and strategic targets by local groups – both Islamist and secular Muslim (Southern Thailand) – very much an Al Qaeda *modus operandi*.

As in other regions of the world, Al Qaeda penetration of Southeast Asian groups changed their orientation. Actual or perceived events - such as US intervention in Afghanistan, US invasion of Iraq, the Abu Ghraib scandal, and alleged desecration of the Koran – have been used ably to justify terrorist threats and acts against Western targets.<sup>5</sup> Until Al Qaeda deepened its influence, Islamist terrorism has been largely against domestic governments and Christian populations. For instance, in an operation coded “Project Natal,” JI bombed a dozen Christian churches throughout Indonesia on December 24, 2000.<sup>6</sup> Al Qaeda developed 9/11 from a failed plan to bomb US aviation targets from Singapore to Los Angeles in 1995. In concert with 9/11, Al Qaeda's Yemeni

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<sup>5</sup> In his autobiography, Imam Samudra discuss the impact of videos and websites of such events that drove him to terrorism. Iman Samurda, *Aku Melawan Teroris*, manuscript, ICPVTR-IDSS, Singapore, 2004

<sup>6</sup> Debriefs of JI member interrogation reports, ICPVTR-IDSS, Singapore, 2005.



members planned to mount an attack against aviation targets out of Bangkok, Hong Kong, Seoul, and Kuala Lumpur but the operation was postponed due to the complexity of coordinating it with the already stretched US component. In addition to plans to hit a US warship off the Malaysian waters, Tawfiq bin Attash alias Khallad, the deputy operational leader of Al Qaeda chaired a high level Al Qaeda meeting in Malaysia with the first two 9/11 hijackers to enter California from Thailand in January 2000.<sup>7</sup> The meeting was held in the condominium of Yazid Sufaat, a member of both JI and Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM). Sufaat, a former Malaysian Army Captain and a US-trained biochemist was also the head of Al Qaeda's Anthrax Program in Kandahar in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup> Zacarias Moussaoui, the suicide hijacker designated to target the White House, arrived in Kuala Lumpur to learn to fly at the Malaysian Academy in Malacca, but instead helped in an Al Qaeda-JI joint operation to procure Ammonium Nitrate to bomb Western targets in Southeast Asia.

The disruption of Al Qaeda-JI plans to bomb American, British, Australian and Israeli diplomatic as well as commercial and other targets by the Internal Security Department (ISD) of Singapore in December 2001, led Southeast Asian governments to uncover the links between Al Qaeda and JI. Still, many Southeast Asian governments continued to live in denial that JI existed on their soil. Until the Bali bombings in October 2002, the Government of Indonesia publicly denied the existence of a terrorist network in its territory as did the Government of Thailand until the disruption of JI plans to bomb American, British, Australian, Israeli and Singaporean diplomatic targets in June 2003.<sup>9</sup> To meet the current and emerging threat, Southeast Asian governments - with US, Australian, European, and Japanese inputs - are slowly but steadily strengthening their intelligence gathering and investigative capabilities. As there is lack of trust within

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<sup>7</sup> 9/11 Commission Report, 2004

<sup>8</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, Al Qaeda's CBRN Program, "Meeting the Challenges of Bioterrorism – Assessing the Threat and Designing Biodefence Strategies, International Bio terrorism Conference, Furigen, organized by the Center for Security Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland, April 22-23, 2005. The author is grateful to Milton Leitenberg for his invaluable insights into the Al Qaeda Anthrax Program particularly for his assessment on the US government declassified documents recovered in Kandahar in late 2001.

<sup>9</sup> In June 2005, the Thai nationals who cooperated with Hambali, the then operations leader of JI, were released from custody by the Bangkok government. Thailand's counter terrorism legislation is exceptionally weak.

ASEAN countries, cooperation is bilateral, at best trilateral. Some governments are striving towards harmonizing legislation, rendition, common databases, exchange of personnel, sharing of experience, transfer of expertise, joint training, and, combined operations.

In Southeast Asia, the contemporary Islamist threat has moved beyond Al Qaeda. Although terrorism is not new to the region, both its scale and nature have changed since 9/11. Since its foundation in March 1988, Al Qaeda imparted ideological, financial, training and operational support to Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines; Lashkar Jundullah in Indonesia; Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM); Jemmah Salafiyah (JS) in Thailand; Arakan Rohingya Nationalist Organisation (ARNO) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) in Myanmar and Bangladesh; JI, a regional group, with a presence in Australia.<sup>10</sup>

Al Qaeda ideologically penetrated regional and local groups fighting territorial struggles and made them believe in its vision and mission of a universal jihad. These groups have adopted Al Qaeda ideology and tactics. For instance, the Singaporean Chief of JI, Ma Salam-at Kastari was planning to hijack and crash an Aeroflot aircraft from Bangkok, Thailand, on to the Changi International Airport, Singapore. According to Kasthari, the choice of a Russian aircraft was to teach Moscow a lesson for what it was doing to the Muslim brothers in Chechnya. Similarly, Bali, Jakarta Marriott and Australian Embassy attacks were designed to be mass fatality/casualty suicide attacks. The tactic of suicide operations and inflicting mass death and injury – hitherto alien to Southeast Asian groups - is clearly an Al Qaeda concept. Al Qaeda's most enduring impact on Southeast Asian groups has been to instill in them a sense of duty to fight near enemies but also the distant enemy - the United States of America. With its increased weakening as an operational organization and its leadership relocated in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, Al Qaeda is increasingly relying on these Southeast Asian groups for action.

### **Operational and Ideological Impact:**

Immediately before the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989, Al Qaeda was created by Dr Azzam, a Palestinian-Jordanian scholar, and his student and

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<sup>10</sup> Singapore Government White Paper on Jemaah Islamiyah, Singapore, 2002.

protégé Usama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi. Having played such a vital role in supporting the Afghan factions against the Soviets, Al Qaeda leaders saw an enemy in Israel immediately after the beginning of the first Palestinian uprising in 1987.<sup>11</sup> In addition to inheriting the anti-Soviet Afghan training and operational infrastructure, Al Qaeda benefitted from the worldwide network created by its predecessor Maktab-il-Khadimat (MAK: Afghan Service Bureau), with 30 offices overseas. As the international community neglected Afghanistan – the country that won the war against communism – and Pakistan – a frontline state in the fight against communism, these two states became the international center for ideological and physical war training of Islamist guerrilla and terrorist groups. After the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s, Afghanistan replaced the Syrian-controlled Bekka Valley as the principal center of international terrorism. As the West looked the other way, Afghanistan evolved into a “Terrorist Disneyland.” Several Islamist groups, principally Al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of the Taliban, the ruling party of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, trained 20,000 foreign mujahidin until the US led coalition intervened in Afghanistan in October 2001.

Al Qaeda provided trained recruits and funds to local Islamist groups fighting in conflict zones where Muslims were suffering including in Tajikistan, Kashmir, Bosnia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Philippines (Mindanao), Indonesia (Maluku and Poso), China’s Xingjiang, Kashmir, Bosnia, Kosovo, Nargono Karabakh, Ogadan, Somalia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, and Rohingya Myanmar. As the bulk of the Arab mujahidin were unwelcome in their home countries, they remained in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Especially after the first World Trade Center attack in February 1993, when the US warned Pakistan to get rid of the mujahidin or be declared a “terrorist state,” the bulk of the Arab mujahidin located in Pakistan moved to Sudan. Al Qaeda had established its new HQ in Sudan in December 1991. American and British pressure on Sudan forced Al Qaeda to relocate to Afghanistan in May 1996. Western intelligence agencies failed to monitor Al Qaeda. After having established new and consolidated old relationships with Balkan, Caucasian, Middle Eastern and East African groups when in Sudan, Al Qaeda was able to develop closer and deeper ties with Asian groups after its relocation to Afghanistan. As an organization with a global membership, Al Qaeda had diverse capabilities as well as access to unprecedented resources. Al Qaeda armed, trained, financed, and indoctrinated three-dozen Islamist groups from Asia, Africa, Middle East, and the Caucuses. In addition to its own training camps in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda

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<sup>11</sup> Ayman al Zawahiri, *The Knights Under the Prophets Banner*, Unpublished manuscript, December 2001

dispatched its trainers to establish or serve in the training camps of other groups in Asia, Africa, Middle East and the Caucasus.

### **Southeast Asian Theatre**

Beginning in 1988 and steadfastly since 1994, Al Qaeda penetrated Southeast Asia. In 1988, Mohommad Jamal Khalifa, the brother-in-law of Osama bin Laden, established the Manila branch of the International Islamic Relief Organisation, a respectable Saudi charity to provide assistance to Islamist groups in the region. Together with February 1993 World Trade Centre bomber Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, Khalid Sheikh Mohommad, the mastermind of 9/11, traveled to Southeast Asia in 1994 with the aim of destroy 12 US airliners over the Pacific. Similarly, within the MILF Camp Abu Bakar complex, the Kuwaiti trainer Omar Al Farooq established Camp Vietnam, to train Southeast Asian groups in guerrilla warfare and terrorism. The aim was to build a core of fighters that will alleviate the suffering of the Muslims at the hands of the oppressive and repressive regimes and rulers supported by the United States.

Three generations of distinct but interlocking mujahidin feature in conflicts today.<sup>12</sup> The experience in Afghanistan was pivotal. A few hundred Southeast Asians who fought in the anti-Soviet multinational Afghan jihad (December 1979-February 1989) joined several Islamist groups, including the core of JI. Jihadi camps active in Southeast Asia - Hodeibia, Palestine, Vietnam, Jabal Kuba in Mindanao, Philippines; Poso, Sulawesi and Balikpapan, Kalimantan, in Indonesia; and Rohingya camps on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border – have now been replaced with smaller and mobile camps. The regional conflict zones of Asia, Africa, Middle East and the Caucasus today compensate partially for the loss of Afghanistan. These camps in the south, especially in light of the environment in Iraq, is likely to produce the third generation of mujahidin. While ideological training is imparted in a few Islamic schools (madaris), military training is imparted in homes and makeshift mobile and static camps, activity and structures difficult to detect from the air.

While Al Qaeda has gravely suffered both the loss of its operational leaders and destruction of its traditional bases in Afghanistan, its intention to attack the United States,

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Roullier, Terrorism-Crime Nexus, Presentation at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Switzerland, June 2005.

its allies and friends have not diminished. With the difficulty of striking targets in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Al Qaeda and its associated groups are aggressively scouting for targets from permissive to lawless zones of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Al Qaeda and increasingly its associated groups are constantly learning – changing to adapt to the new environment. When Al Qaeda-JI leaders deemed that the hardened US and Israeli targets in Manila were not suitable, they shifted the targets to Singapore. When the Singapore operation was disrupted, they shifted the targets to Taiwan, Seoul, Phnom Pen, and Bangkok, cities where they had no previous presence. Like sharks rapidly move in search of fresh opportunities, Al Qaeda-JI seeks new targets. As many Southeast Asian countries suffer from porous borders, availability of firearms and explosives, lack of law and order, complacency, and corruption, the region remains conducive for the operation of local, regional and extra-regional Islamist groups.

### **The Emerging Threat:**

Al Qaeda's traditional roles have changed. In the past, Al Qaeda members were better motivated - willing to kill and die for the cause – and better trained – capable of acquiring strategic, high profile and symbolic targets. As such, Al Qaeda conducted fewer attacks but they were all high impact. By its actions Al Qaeda aimed to inspire, instigate and influence the regional groups and the wider Muslim community to wage war against the US, its Allies and its friends. By co-opting leaders, Al Qaeda influenced regional groups by arming, training, and financing them to acquire tactical targets. With Al Qaeda weakened, its leadership is urging its regional associates to hit both strategic and tactical targets. Al Qaeda's greatest success has been its ability to transfer this knowledge to other groups.

Since Al Qaeda struck America's iconic targets on 9/11, Islamist groups throughout Southeast Asia perceive Al Qaeda as their pioneering vanguard. As the acknowledged "spearhead of Islam," Al Qaeda provides both ideological and strategic direction. Al Qaeda's overarching ideology of a universal jihad facilitates the organization's ability to co-opt regional and local leaders and their respective groups. Al Qaeda's umbrella organization, the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and the Crusaders – created in 1998 – has attempted to unite its Middle Eastern, African, Caucasian and Asian groups and give them a common agenda. In an attempt to develop an alliance similar to Al Qaeda's World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders, Hambali convened a meeting of Southeast Asian groups in Malaysia in 1999.

As the security environment changed the regional umbrella, Rabitat-ul-Mujahidin (Legion of God's warriors) did not meet beyond 2000. Some groups, such as the Free Aceh Movement (both MP-GAM and MB-GAM) in Indonesia, resisted attempts by Hambali to absorb the ethnonationalist Muslim group. Driven by the ideals of Muslim brotherhood, the MILF (which inherited the 500-year Moro Struggle for Independence from the Christian-dominated Philippines) continues to provide critical assistance to Al Qaeda and to Southeast Asian Islamist groups. Despite an active US presence aimed at combating the ASG, the MILF works clandestinely with Al Qaeda, JI, ASG, and the RSRM, a movement of converts (balik Islam). Since the detection of JI in Singapore, JI trainers and combat tacticians have steadfastly worked with Southeast Asian groups to attack Western and domestic targets in the Philippines. In June 2003, the Philippine authorities disrupted multiple attacks in Manila by arresting the MILF SOG leader Muklis Yunos and his Egyptian counterpart planning a number of attacks: against the Presidential Palace, with an oil tanker truck filled with Ammonium Nitrate mixed with saw dust and gasoline; against the US Embassy; ramming an explosives-laden speed boat against a US ship docked at the Manila bay area; against the Pandacan Oil Depot using a rocket propelled grenade triggered by a mobile phone as a remote switch; ramming an explosives-laden vehicle against the International Airport in Manila; and against a major commercial shipping line plying Philippine waters by remote detonation of a car bomb inside the ship cargo. The co-option and integration of Al Qaeda and JI elements into the MILF infrastructure has complicated peace talks between the MILF and the Government of the Philippines.

Spearheaded by JI, the ASG, RSRM, and MILF formed Jayash al Madhi (The Victory of Madhi) in November 14, 2004. At the meeting of the majlis shura [consultative council] in Datu Piang, Mindanao, the constituent leaders of these groups agreed to eliminate their differences and work together. Among the leaders present were Dul Matin the senior most JI leader in the Philippines, and Umar Patek, a JI member involved in the Bali attack, and Gaddhafi Janjalani, the ASG leader. After the death of his brother, Abdulrajak Janjalani, the ASG under Gaddhafi followed a trajectory of both criminality and terrorism; but after ASG suffered severe losses in 2003,<sup>13</sup> he was reborn

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<sup>13</sup> US extensive assistance to AFP beginning 2002 weakened and drove the ASG from Basilan, its stronghold to Tawi Tawi and other islands in the Sulu archipelago. "Current Operations – Lessons Learnt," Senior Conference XLII on Special Operations Forces and the War on Terror," United States Military Academy, West Point, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004.

as an Islamist. At the Datu Piang meeting, it was decided that the member groups will have a common doctrine, and conduct joint training and operations. Al Qaeda sent an unequivocal message to the domestic Islamist groups that they must not only attack domestic but foreign targets. They all escaped the Philippine government bombing of the meeting venue. A key outcome of the Datu Piang meeting was the Valentines Day bombing in 2005 where JI-trained RSRM and ASG members in MILF territory attacked three targets in Manila. Another operation to simultaneously attack targets in Jakarta, Manila and Mindanao was disrupted in April and May 2005. As terrorist infrastructure is robust in the Southern Philippines and in Indonesia, the terrorists are likely to succeed in conducting such coordinated attacks in the future.

### **Understanding the threat:**

The threat in Southeast Asia is both domestic and foreign. The groups active in the zones of domestic conflict are influenced by Middle Eastern funds and ideological guidance from Al Qaeda leaders. To compensate for its depleted operational capability, post 9/11 Al Qaeda is investing extensively in sustained propaganda, inspiring and instigating the wider Muslim community as well as other Islamic movements to join in the fight against the United States, its allies, and its friends.<sup>14</sup> In effect, Al Qaeda's new role includes advancing its traditional mission by non-military means using the mass media, especially the new communication technologies. The surge of regular pronouncements by Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al Zawahiri communicated by audio, video and print media since the US led coalition intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001 have found resonance in the Muslim world especially after US intervention in Iraq in April 2003. Al Qaeda believes that it can only sustain the fight against the US, its allies and its friends by building a large committed support base throughout the Muslim world including in the diaspora and migrant communities. By continuing to politicize and radicalize the Muslims through the dissemination of propaganda, Al Qaeda intends to increase the pool of recruits and support, critical for the continuity of jihad programs by multiple groups.

Even prior to 9/11, Al Qaeda invested in propaganda but to a lesser degree. In the decade preceding 9/11, Al Qaeda's primary mission was to train as many Muslims as possible and to provide specialist assistance to Islamist groups worldwide. Pre-9/11

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<sup>14</sup> JTF-GTMO Information on Detainees, May 2000

virulent propaganda was primarily the responsibility of a number of Islamist parties and groups based in Europe and North America. With a number of these parties and groups coming under close scrutiny from Western governments, Al Qaeda and its associated parties and groups have taken over the role of information dissemination. In comparison to the pre-9/11 propaganda dominated by non Al Qaeda groups, the Al Qaeda brand of propaganda is extremely violent directly calling upon Muslims to kill. Al Qaeda's greatest success in Southeast Asia is being able to successfully instill its ideology in JI and several other existing and emerging smaller groups. Field work at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies in Singapore identified 47 Islamist groups in Indonesia, most formed after 9/11.

Southeast Asian groups have been radicalized by the Middle Eastern, primarily the Arab terrorist and extremist groups. Southeast Asian Islamist and Muslim groups are no different from the South Asian and Central Asian groups. Arabs are only 20% of the Muslim world but they exercise disproportionate influence over the rest of the Muslim world. Many Arabs view the non-Muslim world through the bitter prism of Israel. As the Arabs see themselves as the guardians of Mecca, clerics wield disproportionate influence throughout the rest of the Muslim world. Muslim preachers supported by the financiers from the Gulf, Levant, and North Africa seek to produce a brand of Muslims who follow literal interpretations of the Koran. Today, the greater threat facing the Muslim and the Arab worlds is not terrorism but ideological extremism. Directed to radicalize the moderate Muslims and sustain the support of radical Muslims, the message of violence by the ideologues of jihad from the Middle East need an ideological counterweight. The messages from these ideologues of hatred preach an ideology of global jihad, actively advocated by Al Qaeda. These young radical clerics, primarily from Saudi Arabia, will outlive Al Qaeda and will continue to present a significant threat that cannot be neutralized by kinetic means. The failure to properly understand the nature of the threat will ensure that Islamist extremism and its by-product terrorism will persist and grow substantially in the coming years.

### **Impediments to Crafting an Effective Response:**

Political will is the single most important quality that is necessary and lacking in Southeast Asia to combat terrorism. Most Southeast Asian governments are weak, and their leaders are either corrupt or incompetent. History has shown that those governments



that do not develop zero-tolerance policies against terrorism will eventually suffer. Bali is a classic example: Indonesian leaders and bureaucrats repeatedly denied JI's existence in Indonesia. Had the Indonesians take the threat seriously and moved against the robust JI network after JI was disrupted in Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines in December 2001 and January 2002, the loss of 202 lives on October 12, 2002, might have been prevented. The international community should develop a zero-tolerance terrorism code and those state actors that defy the code should be punished. Supporting strong leaders with political will and political capital to make change; appointing and promoting leaders to the security sector based on merit, ability and performance; and building partnerships with Western governments is the gravest need of the hour. To end terrorism in Southeast Asia, there is no magic bullet. Over a period of time, the counter-terrorist and anti-terrorist programs developed will begin to impact on terrorist groups and their support bases. Although policies and measures will be formulated to fight the Islamist brand of terrorism, it can appreciably reduce the threat posed both by Islamist and by non-Islamist groups. Legislative and practical measures will create a counter terrorist environment, impacting on ideological (left and right wing groups) and ethnonationalist (separatist, irredentist, and autonomy) groups, eroding their operational and support capabilities. Some groups such as the MILF will agree to talks to escape and evade the global counter terrorism initiatives. As a result, the post 9/11 environment will force several terrorist groups to consider retaining their strike capabilities but consider the political option seriously at least even tactically.

The strategic and operational environments have changed dramatically from the Cold War to the post-Cold War period. While terrorists in the 1970s and 1980s killed in low numbers, terrorists in the 1990s killed in hundreds and aimed to kill in thousands.<sup>15</sup> Because of the increased lethality of the contemporary wave of terrorism, a government cannot wait until a terrorist attack occurs to act. National power must be used to prevent terrorist attacks. But the prevalent law enforcement environment and mindset in Southeast Asia is to wait for an attack to occur and then begin an investigation. The bulk of Southeast Asian law enforcement officers are fishermen, not hunters. As in the Bali, Marriot, and Australian Embassy bombings in Indonesia, law enforcement officers neglected intelligence – that provided to them from outside forces as well as that which

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<sup>15</sup> Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, the nephew of the 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Muhammed, bombed the World Trade Centre in February 1993. His intention was to topple one tower on the other and kill over a 100,000 Americans.

they themselves generated. After each attack, the Indonesian police were able to conduct a brilliant post-blast investigation. Without preliminary evidence, the criminal-justice systems of most Southeast Asian countries constrain wire-tapping, surveillance, arrests, raids and searches of premises. Even after significant death and the threat of further destruction, law enforcement systems in the region are designed to act efficiently after the event – investigate, collect evidence, arrest, charge, and prosecute. Unless there is a strong lead, the prevailing environment is not conducive for the average police officer to expend time, energy and resources to proactively initiate an operation to collect intelligence. A sea change in law enforcement culture is essential to combat terrorism. Instead of case building by gathering evidence after the attack to prosecute, law enforcement authorities must proactively invest their assets to collect intelligence to detect and disrupt terrorist attacks. This involves confidential informants, undercover officers and cultivation of other assets, and their effective management, a mind intensive and a resource intensive process.

The strategy for combating terrorism must be both tactical and strategic. In addition to investment in operational counter terrorism to prevent attacks, there must be investment in strategic counter terrorism to make it more difficult for terrorist groups to recruit and generate support. Winning hearts, minds and bodies is necessary to prevent the terrorists from influencing publics essential for their regeneration. Towards developing a broad based comprehensive strategy, government leaders must co-opt ethnic and religious leaders from communities affected by terrorism. The terrorist group and the government will compete for public support. Like a company, a terrorist group needs to grow in order to survive. Therefore, recruitment and flow of support – intelligence, funds, weapons, and sanctuary – remains essential. It will be communities that eventually defeat terrorism, and governments must ensure that Muslims are not demonized. Unless they cultivate and support the Muslim elites to play the frontline role against extremism and terrorism, political leaders and bureaucrats will fail to reach the Muslim masses. To disrupt the public appeal of terrorist groups, it is essential to legally criminalize or designate and then target the terrorist support networks. In Indonesia, JI is still a legal group and not a proscribed organization. Through the MMI, JI networks disseminate virulent propaganda with the intention of indoctrinating supporters and potential supporters that join them and like-minded groups. Without comprehensive legislation, Indonesia and the Philippines will fail to target terrorist propaganda (including through the worldwide web), and fund raising. Legislation is also necessary to prosecute religious leaders that spread hatred in schools and elsewhere. A robust ideological response, where

Muslim clerics condemn the preachers of hatred, is lacking throughout Muslim Southeast Asia.

Intelligence cooperation has improved since the Bali attacks. The security and intelligence agencies of the region meet frequently. It is critical to extend this cooperation beyond the security and intelligence domain to law enforcement and judicial cooperation. Furthermore, governments must graduate from monitoring and cooperation to coordination and collaboration where joint and combined action is taken to erode terrorist capabilities. For instance, terrorism will persist in the South of Thailand as long as Bangkok does not work collaboratively with Malaysia. As terrorists increasingly operate transnationally, future CT-initiatives rest on building common databases, exchange of personnel, joint training, combined operations, sharing of experience, and transfer of expertise. Due to years of suspicion, the progress toward cooperation within ASEAN countries has been slow. As Southeast Asian terrorists do not respect political borders, developing a uniform zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism throughout Southeast Asia is imperative. International and regional measures must be developed and implemented throughout the region to prevent terrorists from seeking sanctuary or support. When JI was targeted in Singapore and Malaysia in December 2001, the group moved to Thailand, Indonesia and to the Philippines. Similarly, when Thailand targeted its terrorists in the south in 2003-5, many of its leaders and operational members moved to northern Malaysia. As post-modern terrorists are highly mobile, fighting post-modern terrorism will involve the universal adoption of measures and countermeasures. Like a balloon that when pressed in one place will bulge out in another, terrorists will move from inhospitable to hospitable theatres.<sup>16</sup> To be effective, counter-terrorist action by authorities in Southeast Asia should be coordinated. For instance, if the movement of JI recruits seeking training from Indonesia to Manado or from Indonesia to Southern Mindanao is disrupted, the terrorists will use the Sabah, Malaysia route. In the fight against terrorism, to prevent escaping terrorists from relocating their support and operational infrastructures when attacked, the development of governmental measures and countermeasures will have to be coordinated.

Combating terrorism is a partnership between the industrialized and the developing nations. An international fund against terrorism should be developed to assist

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<sup>16</sup> To quote a pre-eminent terrorism specialist Bruce Hoffman, "Like sharks, terrorists rapidly move in search of new and fresh opportunities." The Southeast Asian terrorists are no different.

poor countries or countries that lack a capacity to meet the challenge of terrorism. To sustain a counter-terrorism campaign over a period of time, any government requires substantial resources and expertise. Most terrorist-affected countries in the developing world lack the trained manpower and the resources to fight a protracted campaign. The rich and poor governments must develop a shared response in the fight against terrorism. The thinking of both the west and the rest of the world must change. Over 90% of the terrorist groups are born in the developing world, but the terrorists have established state-of-the-art terrorist support networks in the developed world. Until 9/11, the west tolerated the presence of these networks as they did not pose a direct and an immediate threat to the host countries. Whenever governments in the south requested for the extradition of known terrorists from the west, the host governments spoke of the incompatibility of the criminal justice and prisons systems or of human rights violations by the requesting government. Until 9/11, terrorists raised significant funds in North America, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand that supported multiple terrorist operations in the global south. Even today, a number of Islamist and non Islamist groups generate significant support from their diaspora and migrant communities as well as from charities, businesses and other front, cover, and sympathetic organizations. With persistent calls from Al Qaeda leadership that it is the duty of every Muslim to wage jihad, the terrorist support networks in the west are mutating into terrorist operational networks. Furthermore, with increased western assistance to governments in the south, the terrorist threat to western governments and societies will increase. It must be understood that Al Qaeda's first wave of attacks were in Middle Eastern and Asian countries and it was the failure of those governments to degrade and destroy the groups that led a spill over of the threat to the West. A shared response, where the west works with the rest of the world, will reduce the threat at a global level. Western assistance to Southeast Asia to fight terrorism at home will eventually reduce the threat to the West.

The western approach – especially the US approach – to fighting terrorism is largely kinetic and lethal. The US Department of Defence leaders must be aware of the limitations of military or kinetic response. The military response is paramount to reduce the immediate threat, especially if the threat is high. Nonetheless, to end terrorism, it is essential in parallel to address the root causes and enact prophylactic measures. Multipronged and multidimensional responses are essential to dissuade serving terrorists and prevent the recruitment and production of new terrorists. While instituting good governance is the strategic solution to terrorism, its proponents must steadfastly create a norm and an ethic in society against the use of terrorism as a political tool. The

international community must not fear criminalizing the political struggles of groups that practice political violence. Then terrorism as a tool will appeal less to most groups especially if governmental, non governmental and intergovernmental organizations create institutions to change the reality on the ground.

### **Long Range Response:**

Except JI, MILF, and ASG, the other groups in Southeast Asia are not mature terrorist groups. They are in a very early stage of development. As vast majority of the groups are in a formative phase, it is necessary to design and develop key capabilities to target both the mature groups with robust terrorist capabilities and the maturing groups with ideological capabilities. Addressing the grievances and aspirations of marginalized communities and opening new avenues to vent their angers and frustrations, will contribute to an appreciable decrease in violence and support for violence. In parallel, governments – supported by the rich and powerful Western nations – must seek to improve the economic status of the terrorist affected community. For instance, in the south of Thailand, the conflict can only be ameliorated by the political authority using economic incentives to win over the Muslim public, working closely with Malaysia, and building a state-of-the-art intelligence apparatus.<sup>17</sup> The bottom line is to persuade the Muslim elite of Thailand that it would be more advantageous and profitable for them to remain part of the Thai state than to secede. The mismanagement of the south by successive Thai governments has created the opportunity for secessionist and Islamist ideologies to take root in the minds of the Muslim elite and Islamic community institutions. While intelligence-led operations can target the terrorist network that has penetrated the religious and educational institutions, the political authority working with the Muslim political and religious leaders should offer a counter ideology. Government should work towards strengthening the educational and religious establishments in the south to prevent future extremist and terrorist infiltration. Government should direct, hold responsible, and provide resources and incentives to Muslim councils to manage the religious and educational centers through self regulation and other means. By systematically co-opting moderate Muslim leaders – both educators and religious leaders

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<sup>17</sup> Briefing on Southern Thailand to General Winai, Secretary General, NSC, Thailand  
December 23 2004, IDSS, Singapore

– government should build a norm and an ethic in the community against the preaching of hatred. Each school, mosque and especially teacher, both government or privately funded - must be registered and if necessary monitored by an independent Muslim council working in partnership with government. Government should prosecute religious and education leaders that preach hatred, incite violence, or participate or provide military-style training, with or without firearms. To discourage and dissuade extremism, government should strengthen existing and build new institutions with resources and authority, set deliverable goals, and monitor political and economic progress. In most such cases, the strategic solution to violence rests not primarily in operational counter terrorism but in good governance.

In comparison with other regions, the security threats confronting Southeast Asia are different both in nature and scale. Having lived under the shadow of large Buddhist, Christian and Hindu populations, vast majority of the South Asian Muslims are tolerant and moderate. A minority of Southeast Asian Muslims has been politicized and radicalized by extra-regional influences – notably from the Middle East – and stands willing to use political violence, even terrorism, to create Islamic states. Today, the region hosts a few hundred Islamist and Muslim political parties, guerrilla and terrorist groups campaign for the enforcement of Islamic law. Although these organizations represent a miniscule proportion of the Muslim population, power hungry political leaders in religious garb have successfully (mis)used religion to mobilize significant support to achieve their political aims. As Southeast Asia hosts one of the largest Muslim populations, many Muslims perceive duty bound to assist fellow Muslims suffering in conflict zones - such as Mindanao, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, - and now Iraq.

Governmental, non-governmental and international response must be at three levels – global, regional and domestic. As the Islamist groups depend on each other for support, a concerted and a coordinated approach is essential. Al Qaeda is the unifier, coordinator, and the guide, and therefore, targeting Al Qaeda is paramount. Although Al Qaeda's capability has suffered, its intention to attack has not diminished. Although militarily weak, Al Qaeda is ideologically resilient. Despite severe damage to the organization at multiple levels, Al Qaeda is still playing a significant role in setting the agenda. As the October 2002 (French oil supertanker Limburg, US personnel in Kuwait, and Bali) May 2003 (Riyadh, two attacks in Chechnya, 21 gas stations in Karachi, and Casablanca) wave of attacks demonstrated, Al Qaeda still retains the ability to coordinate and providing strategic and tactical direction to groups in Asia, Middle East, Caucasus

and in the Horn of Africa. From Pakistan, Hamza al Rabiyya, the successor to Khalid Sheikh Muhammed continues to communicate with groups in Southeast Asia, and from Saudi Arabia, funds continue to flow into Asian terrorist groups.

Today, the global nature of the threat has changed and Southeast Asia is no exception. The future threat stems from the global jihad movement and not from Al Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden. Rather than one single entity, the post 9/11 Al Qaeda is a conglomerate of organizations. Al Qaeda proper - estimated at 4000 members in October 2001 – has been replaced by Al Qaeda plus two-dozen associated groups armed, trained and financed by Al Qaeda. With Al Qaeda having suffered significantly in its operational capability, it is trying to compensate for its losses by turning to groups and members it had trained in Afghanistan and elsewhere to join the fight. Despite being aggressively hunted worldwide, Al Qaeda's greatest success has been to provide ideological direction. Newer groups such as Abu Musab Al Zarkawi's Tawhid Wal Jihad – renamed Al Qaeda of the Two Rivers – will likely present a comparable threat in the future. Zarkawi has been communicating with Al Qaeda cells rendered leaderless including cells in Asia. Zarkawi has already reconnected with support cells in the Maldives, Malaysia and Hong Kong suggesting his penetrative power. Today, the threat is more diverse, dispersed and diffused. To meet the challenge of the post 9/11 threat, a global response – both a kinetic and a non-kinetic response - is required.

### **The Future:**

The post 9/11 security environment in Southeast Asia presents new challenges and opportunities. With enhanced security in the West, Western and domestic targets in the South will face the brunt of terrorist attacks. In the foreseeable future, Southeast Asian governments will be burdened with the task of preventing large, medium and small-scale attacks against domestic as well as Western targets on its soil. For supporting the US in the fight against terrorism, Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asian countries will earn the wrath of domestic and foreign Islamist groups. Nonetheless, governments in the South have no option but to cooperate with the resource rich and the technologically advanced west to fight terrorist groups. Until governments worldwide including in Southeast Asia develop a common strategy and cooperative structures to fight terrorism at domestic, regional and global levels, terrorism and extremism will remain – and grow – as a significant threat. The burden of response must not be state-centric but must be shared by non-governmental organizations. To break the duality,

Muslim and other governments in the region must reach out to Muslim populations subjected to anti-Western propaganda. To support such local initiatives, Western nations must invest in public diplomacy, hitherto neglected by the US.

As the situation is fluid and dynamic, there is no standard textbook for fighting violent Islamism in Southeast Asia. The current threat can be reduced by maximizing the successes and minimizing the policy and operational failures against Al Qaeda and its associated groups in the region. With the destruction of its camps throughout Afghanistan and worldwide arrests, the Southeast Asian groups have established their own training camps in the region. Despite the targeting of JI, the group has relocated to Mindanao, their strategic base, and continues to operate its complex of training and base camps. Despite efforts to target them, in March 2005, 20 JI members graduated, demonstrating the continuing threat. Unlike before, these camps provide Al Qaeda type terrorist training in suicide operations, assassination operations, bombing of aircraft and ships, etc to local groups. The Southeast Asian groups will become more proficient in terrorist attacks. As Western intelligence agencies assist Southeast Asian governments in interdicting, targeting, and neutralizing the capabilities of Southeast Asian groups, their terrorist cells are transforming their operational and support activities, especially their modus operandi. In addition to relying on Gulf charities, they are also relying on local businesses and individual donors. With government interception of satellite and mobile phones, they are using encrypted email communication and human couriers for transmission of important messages. They are also shifting from targeting hardened targets to attacking soft targets. In a dynamic environment, flexibility and agility is key for frontline law enforcement and intelligence services engaged in fighting terrorism. Ideally, the terrorist group must become the mentor of government operational agencies.

## **Conclusion:**

Since the US-led coalition intervention in Afghanistan, the threat has moved beyond Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda has lost its pre-eminent status as the pioneering vanguard of the Islamic movements operationally but not ideologically. It lacks the organizational structure and the resources to mount global operations by itself but is able and willing to inspire, instigate and coordinate operations by other groups. As Al Qaeda diminishes in size and strength, it is increasingly trying to rebuild and regain its influence by relying on its associate groups in Asia, Middle East, Africa and the Caucasus to conduct operations. Unless and until the pressure on Al Qaeda diminishes, the group intends to survive by



working together with its regional associates. The international, regional and domestic responses to the associate groups will determine whether the remaining Al Qaeda will survive or perish. In many ways, Al Qaeda has completed its role in Southeast Asia. Without Al Qaeda, its associate groups – especially JI - will carry forward Al Qaeda's vision and mission.

The nature of the threat is changing rapidly to adapt to US-led global security measures and countermeasures. In keeping with its mandate, pre-9/11 Al Qaeda focused only on conducting spectacular attacks. Although post-9/11 Al Qaeda and its associated groups are unable to mount coordinated multiple suicide attacks of the scale of 9/11 inside the US, they are still capable of mounting medium and small attacks of the scale of Bali, Riyadh, Casablanca in the US. There are three reasons why Al Qaeda has failed to conduct another 9/11 inside the US: first, increased human vigilance; second, unprecedented international and domestic law enforcement, security and intelligence cooperation; and third, Al Qaeda is being hunted denying the group time, space and resources to plan, prepare and mount theatrical or spectacular attacks. As long as Western governments can place relevant threat information in the public domain to keep the public alert and sustain sharing of information with Middle Eastern, Asian, and other governments, the threat to continental US and to the rest of the West can be managed. As existing and emerging groups have not abandoned their struggle to fight the West, the US/Western partnership with Southeast Asia is essential to protect future US/Western security.

Southeast Asia alone cannot fight future Southeast Asian terrorism. To reduce the threat in Southeast Asia, partially compounded by external developments, it is essential to target both indigenous and foreign groups active in Southeast Asia. This can only be accomplished by Southeast Asian nations within with governments outside the region. Severing the Al Qaeda operational and ideological link is paramount. Despite unprecedented security measures and counter measures since 9/11, the Al Qaeda movement remains a formidable threat to security of the world and the region. Since 9/11, over 100 attacks worldwide by Al Qaeda and its associated groups – including a dozen attacks in the Southeast Asia region – have been aborted to disrupted. The Bali, Casablanca, Djerba, Chechnya, Minadanao, and Karachi bombings have demonstrated that the threat has moved beyond Al Qaeda. Its regional associates, such as the Southeast

Asian groups, are as lethal as their parent group. They have learnt and will increasingly use Al Qaeda tactics as such hijacking and crashing aircraft, contact poisons, anti-aircraft weapons, and a range of other techniques to inflict mass fatalities on its enemies. As the East Africa bombings in August 1998, the attack on the Cole in October 2000, 9/11, and a dozen strikes after 9/11 demonstrated, we are not fighting terrorist groups but networks that span regions.

Finally, despite international efforts, Al Qaeda – the most hunted terrorist group in history – is still potent. Despite the arrest of Al Qaeda members and associate members in 102 countries, including in Southeast Asia, the response has been inadequate to operationally shut down the group. Despite the relentless hunt, violent Islamic movements have been able to replenish wastage in rank and file and continue the fight. The robust Islamist milieu in the post-Iraq period is facilitating the continuation of the fight. As Al Qaeda movement is a learning organization, the fight against the Al Qaeda brand of terrorism will be long and hard. As terrorist groups enjoy an average life span of 13.5 years, it is essential to build the counter terrorist structures and trained personnel to meet both the current and the long-range threat. Al Qaeda is an organization of organizations with a global reach and therefore no one country can fight and destroy it. Furthermore, Al Qaeda and its associated groups threaten military, diplomatic, and civilian targets; use conventional and unconventional weapons; and are capable of operating in the air, land and sea. Therefore, a wide range of security measures and counter measures are necessary to protect both civilian and infrastructure targets from attack. Al Qaeda's global jihad ideology appeals to a cross section of Southeast Asian society – the group recruits from the rich, poor, educated, and the less educated. As such, Southeast Asian governments need to enlist the support of educational and religious institutions, community and other influential leaders to build a norm and an ethic against the use, misuse and abuse of religion for political purposes. As the scale of threat is high, Southeast Asian governments have no option to work with a range of public and private sector partners in the fight against terrorism. To manage the threat posed by Al Qaeda and its associate groups, a multipronged, multidimensional, a multiagency and a multinational effort by ASEAN as a region is paramount.

## **Southeast Asia and Foreign Terrorist Groups:**

### **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), A case study**

Ranga Kalansooriya

#### **Why Southeast Asia?**

Southeast Asia has been a 'Region of Convenience' for many foreign terrorist groups, mainly those with Asian origin. Historic geo-political and socio-economic bonds between other parts of Asia and the Southeast Asian region have provided numerous terrorist groups with an environment extremely conducive to their operations. However, the in-depth operations of terror networks with maximum global reach like Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia came into spotlight following the Bali Bombing on October 12, 2002. This attack was an eye opener to many countries in the region, forcing Southeast Asian authorities to accept the depth of the issue and focus more on foreign organizations operating in the region, whether or not they had demonstrated links to local groups.

The loose nature of security environment in the region has facilitated the expansion and operation of global terrorist organizations in the region; and weak counter-terrorism legislation creates an environment in which local groups can operate with a free hand and foreign groups find a safe haven in which to create extremely active cells. The recent developing threats of terrorism in the region has finally attracted the attention of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Otherwise, this group would never pay attention to an issue so far out of its traditional pattern of operations. Nevertheless, the fight against terrorism in Southeast Asia is being conducted in the typical 'Asean Way' – based on consensus - a time consuming process. The region is yet to adopt vibrant Counter Terrorism (CT) legislation. Most of the countries have become blind followers of the UN conventions, without transforming them to address local conditions. Yet conducting counter-terrorism in light of local conditions has become an increasingly important pre-requisite to success, especially in the hotspots such as Indonesia.

In its contemporary history, Southeast has witnessed its share of political violence, some of which demonstrated characteristics of terrorism; but these tended to be

isolated. For instance, the Communist uprising in Malaysia in early '70s never had a widespread impact on the regional security environment in the way that events in other parts of the world that nurtured terrorism. Conflicts of the nature of those that spurred terrorism in Southeast Asia did not demand the concerted, robust, collective efforts that will be required to face multi-faceted threats networked terror groups with global reach like that of Al Qaeda. The security establishments in Southeast Asia were traditionally more focused on fighting crime than on terrorism. As a result, even at this late stage, many countries in the region are still combating terrorism with their existing criminal legislation. The law enforcement agencies of Southeast Asia are yet to be provided with sufficient training in counter terrorism – a challenge that demands in-depth socio-economic and political insight quite distinct from the usual, local security perspective. The absence of firm political will and commitment has added fuel to the aggravating situation.

As in the case of any other region, foreign terrorist groups operating in Southeast Asia have common goals, financing, procurement, recruitment and propaganda. Financing is being conducted in many forms by either direct or indirect means. Many front organizations working for foreign terrorist groups are highly active in the region, conducting direct fund raising operations while underground cells are busy engaged in extremely clandestine operations such as human smuggling, narcotics and weapon smuggling. Investing in businesses is another way of generating funds for terrorist organizations. Many organizations are reinvesting the money they raise through clandestine operations in established businesses with a view of diverting their profits toward procurement of arms and ammunitions to fuel their battles at home.

The Southeast Asian region provides an attractive weapon bazaar for these foreign groups. Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos in particular have become an attractive market not only for weapons but also for other logistical items for these organizations. The longstanding historical and cultural relationships between Southeast Asia and the rest of Asia, many of which are outside officially regulated channels readily monitored by governments, have created safe heavens for many front liners of terrorist groups. Foreign terrorist groups have exploited this cultural environment not only to pursue their own operations but also to provide resources and expertise to indigenous groups. Sharing knowledge and experience, most commonly according to a commercial model has been a general pattern among these groups. This case study of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) provides tangible examples of these links.

## **Foreign Terrorist Groups Operating in Southeast Asia**

Many South Asian and Middle Eastern Groups have found Southeast Asia as a convenient place for their fund raising, procurement and propaganda operations thanks to longstanding historic, cultural and political bonds. Some of the foreign terrorist groups operating in this region are directly connected to Al Qaeda network. For instance, groups like Salafi Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and Islamic Group of Egypt (IG) could be identified as Al-Qaeda's operating arms in Southeast Asia. The Pakistani based Lashkar-e-Toiba is another Al-Qaeda linked group operating in this region with strong historical and religious links to the Muslims in Southeast Asia.

Lebanese Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite Terrorist Organization with a global reach sponsored by Iran and supported by Syria, has a significance presence in Southeast Asia for over two decades. Members of the Hezbollah cell operating in Singapore in the late 1990s and into 2000 entered using a visa-waiver program. Once they arrived, they quickly married local women to legalize their presence [1]. According to Levitt Mathew [2], operatives of this network were behind an attempt to bomb the Israeli embassy in Bangkok in 1994, as well as a series of other terrorist plots throughout the 1990s. The leader of the network, Pandu Yudhawitna, was recruited in Malaysia in the early 1980s, and only later became the Southeast Asian point-man for Hezbollah operations and support activities there. Throughout the 1990s, Hezbollah members were active in Singapore, recruiting local Sunnis, collecting intelligence on Israeli and U.S. ships in the Malacca Straits, and planning attacks. Authorities there uncovered a suicide speed-boat attack very similar to the one that was foiled about a year after September 11 off Gibraltar, says Mathew.

Hezbollah has conducted significant fundraising in Southeast Asia; and collected intelligence on synagogues in Manila and Singapore. Hezbollah members procured and cached weapons in Thailand and the Philippines, and checked on them periodically to make sure they were still working in case they were called upon to conduct an attack at any given time. They collected intelligence on the El-Al office in Bangkok, on ships arriving in Singapore, and on U.S. Navy and Israeli merchant ships in the Malacca Straits. The Southeast Asian Hezbollah network recruited many local Sunni Muslims, and sent several to Lebanon for training. According to B Raman [3] who quotes Indonesian

intelligence officials, foreign terrorist groups had used Poso in Central Sulawesi as a training ground in recent years. These were mainly to train Southeast Asians, mainly Thais, Malaysians and Singaporeans who fought for anti-American war of Al Qaeda networks.

The underground markets in Thailand and Myanmar offer abundant supplies of weapons and ammunitions to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) Guerillas and United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) terrorists in Assam of the northeast India, writes Bibhu Prasad Routray [4]. The operational capabilities of these groups in Southeast Asian region are highly sophisticated. The route of weapons to Northeast India begins in Cambodia, says Routray. “Cox’s Bazaar, a completely unmonitored port in Bangladesh, has emerged as a major transit center for the supply of illegal arms and ammunition, not only feeding criminals and extremist elements in that country (Bangladesh), but also the medley of insurgent outfits in India’s northeast. Most of the arms passing through this port originate from Cambodia, and are routed through southern Thailand on tiny high-speed boats.” The Sikh groups (BKI) also have a significant presence in the region, mainly focusing on fund raising and procurement. However, the best case study of how foreign terrorist groups are operating in Southeast Asia is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka.

### **Case Study: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)**

When the December 26, 2004 tsunami devastated large tracts of Sri Lanka's coastline, it did not take long for the inevitable question to come up: What is the damage caused to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)? An even more puzzling question was on its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran: Is he alive or dead ? The very nature of these questions, and the conflicting answers given by various quarters point to the enigma that is the LTTE. It is a highly secretive organization whose workings are hard to fathom and even harder to unravel. And beneath the veneer of a liberation organization lies a vast and intricate international network that would shame many a multinational corporation.

The LTTE thrives in an era when norms of international terrorism have assumed well formalized organizational structures and extremely novel operating styles. In most cases, the battle has exceeded the parameters of conventional guerilla combat or terrorist

activities. Sri Lanka provides a tangible example of the challenges, successes and mistakes that emerge in fighting against terror both on military and political grounds. After fighting one of the most ruthless terrorist outfits in the world, the LTTE, Sri Lanka is now enjoying its longest 'no war situation' – which has so far lasted over three years. The Norwegian peace brokers continue to work to maintain goodwill on both sides with the assistance of Scandinavian peace monitors, but relations between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government remain highly fragile and volatile. If recent setbacks eventually lead to a failure of the peace effort, both the Government and the LTTE will bear responsibilities for being dubious, employing double standards, and not making serious commitments to the process.

The main political and operational focus of the LTTE is primarily limited to Sri Lanka, but its support structure and collateral criminal activities are trans-national in nature. The organization's octopus styled network spans all over the world including Africa and South America. And most importantly their dealings in those countries are wide-ranging, including narcotics, gold, arms and ammunition, and human smuggling. The presence and scope of the LTTE in Southeast Asia is widespread. The organization first expanded its wings into the region during its own early stages in the early '80s. Today, it has many bases freely operating in many fields such as procurement, fund raising, training and propaganda for the organization supported through the aforesaid criminal dealings. This paper examines the present status of the LTTE and its network in Southeast Asia and possible threat it poses to the security of the region.

The LTTE, one of the most ruthless and successful terrorist organizations in the world, has already proven the fact that the conduct of modern warfare is not only about cadres, weapons, military strategies and battlefields, but also about perceptions. Having begun with a small group of fighters in the early '70s, the LTTE within its first one-and-a-half decades of operations produced the most ruthless and committed suicide platoon in the world before 9/11. Its unique characteristic of forcing every cadre to wear a cyanide capsule around the neck - to evade any possible arrest alive – has been the driving force for every cadre to feel the cause is more important than his/her life. At the same time, its well-coordinated propaganda machinery around the world has been successful in collecting funds and generating international sympathy towards its cause.

## **Look East Policy**

The LTTE, planning to expand its horizons in the early '80s, adopted a 'Look East Policy'. Prabhakaran initiated moves for starting his own shipping line in February 1984 aiming at supply routes via the surrounding sea and also mobilizing its cadres who basically were smugglers. D R Karthikeyan, the former head of the Special Investigation Team of Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, in his latest book 'Triumph of Truth' elaborates on the emergence of the Tiger shipping lines:

Experienced men and those reliable and wedded to the LTTE's objective were needed to run LTTE ships and to train cadres who would man future shipping lines. There were many merchant navy officers, sailors and engineers from Velvettithurai (Prabhakaran's home town) and other parts of northern and eastern Sri Lanka. Some of them had done training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri Nautical Engineering College in Bombay (now Mumbai). On Prabhakaran's instructions, his Jaffna Commander Kittu sent an emissary to meet Captain David, a merchant Navy officer who was on holiday at his home in Jaffna in February 1984. Captain David was asked to meet Prabhakaran regarding the establishment of an LTTE shipping service. He was introduced to Kumaran Pathmanadan alias 'KP', the LTTE's Chief procurer of arms, communication equipment and other war items. . . . Captain David met Prabhakaran in Chennai in March 1984. Together with 'KP', they chalked out an elaborate strategy to float maritime companies in Southeast Asia, based mainly in Singapore and Malaysia. 'Arasu Maritime Private Ltd' was one of their first ventures. The support of Singapore-based Tamils was enlisted for this purpose. An old Chinese vessel, 'Sun-Hing', was registered in Panama in October 1984. The name of the ship was changed to 'MV Cholan.' Meanwhile, several firms were floated to make enquiries about military wares. 'Captain David and Associates' was one such firm. The ship 'MV Cholan' started its voyage in 1985 with general cargo from Southeast Asia to Vishakhapatnam in India. It also carried powerful boat engines, communication equipment, machine guns, tinned food, packet food, camouflage uniform items, tents and rain coats." [5]

The LTTE's links to Southeast Asia goes well beyond two decades and still the region remains one of its major supply bases. Its 'Look East Policy' has been extremely beneficial to the organization and would continue to be so. Porous borders, corrupt officials, less concentration on security issues, attractive arms bazaars - a by-product of protracted domestic and international conflicts - and presence of Tamils (especially in the case of Singapore and Malaysia) with Jaffna and South Indian origin, were the main



features that attracted Tigers to the Southeast Asian region. Even LTTE leader Prabhakaran has some family roots to the former Malaya peninsula through his father, Velupillai.[6]


In Southeast Asia the LTTE has limited (if any) political and popular support. Still, their reliance on front-cover businesses, Tigers operatives, and some selected Tamil residents in those respective countries for their clandestine operations has served them well. The LTTE has a vibrant presence across Southeast Asia. The main modus operandi of operations in the region is through the front companies of the LTTE, which include shipping companies, trading firms, restaurants, cyber cafes and hotels. This was confirmed by Thai Army Commander General Surayudh Chulanont stating that the Tigers were running front companies in Thailand as front covers for arms purchases.[7] In most of its operations, the LTTE hires locals, mainly for transportation to evade suspicion by security personnel. One Thai national arrested on July 3, 2002 with a cache of arms and ammunition revealed that he had been hired by the Tigers.

### **LTTE's KP Department**

Shanmugam Kumaran Tharmaligham alias Kumaran Pathmanathan (KP) is the head of the LTTE's international financing and procurement division. With the unsung motto 'Catch me if you can,' KP has been one of the most wanted terrorists in the world for the past one-and-a-half decade period. India has demanded his extradition for his active involvement in the assassination of former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi.

KP mainly operates from Southeast Asia. As the head of the LTTE's international finance and procurement division, he heads its most sophisticated shipping network which has some 22 ships sailing around the world under different flags. The LTTE operates more than 100 active cells around the globe under KP's leadership. He hunts for better weapon bazaars in the world and can strike deals within hours. Among its numerous criminal functions are document forgery which has been extremely beneficial not only to the LTTE, but also to many other terrorist organizations as well. KP is well known for his ability to speak English, French and Sinhala apart from his mother tongue, Tamil. He is said to be traveling with over 20 different passports under various pseudonyms. KP's main bases has been Singapore, Rangoon, Bangkok, Phnom Pen and several other cities in Southeast Asia.

Interpol




22 November 2004

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Corruption  
Environmental Crime  
Forensic  
Regional activities  
Information Technology Crime

## Wanted

**THARMALINGAM, Shanmugam Kumaran**



1995

Legal Status	
Present family name:	<b>THARMALINGAM</b>
Forename:	<b>SHANMUGAM KUMARAN</b>
Sex:	MALE
Date of birth:	6 April 1955 (49 years old)
Place of birth:	KANKENSANTURAI / JAFFNA, Sri Lanka
Language spoken:	English , French , Sinhalese , Tamil
Nationality:	Sri Lanka

Physical description	
Distinguishing marks and characteristics:	HAIR COMBED SIDEWAYS

Offences	
Offences:	ORGANISED CRIME , TERRORISM
Arrest Warrant Issued by:	CHENNAI / India COLOMBO / Sri Lanka

The Interpol notice on KP

## LTTE network in Southeast Asia



## **LTTE Operations in Southeast Asia**

A case-by-case analysis on Tiger operations in each Southeast Asian country reveals the extent of operations of the LTTE in the region and its possible involvement in the broader global terrorist threat.

### **Thailand**

Thailand has been one of the major LTTE bases for its clandestine operations of procurement and transshipment of arms and ammunition for over two decades. The origin of the voyage of the ill-fated merchant vessel Yahata in which LTTE's then Deputy Sathasivam Krishnakumar alias Kittu was sailing with a large consignment of weaponry, was Phuket. Kittu blew the ship up when the Indian Navy intercepted the vessel in December 1993. The LTTE was attracted to Thailand by its specific geo-political characteristics: its long coastline facing the Indian Ocean, a highly corrupt bureaucracy, porous borders and most importantly the busy weapons bazaar that has catered to many insurgency groups over the past 50 years. Voyaging the 2,200 kilometres between shores of Sri Lanka and Thailand has not been a major task for LTTE vessels.

While Cambodia is the hub of the LTTE's East Asia network, Thailand continues to serve as the most important country for trans-shipment of arms and ammunition and coordination of logistics.[8] Also, since events in Myanmar since 1996 has created impediments for the LTTE operations in that country, Thailand, especially its Andamans seaports became more important for the Tiger operations. An island near Phuket is being used by the Tigers as its shipping base to smuggle drugs, Lloyds list reported on March 26, 2000. According to Canadian Security Intelligence Service's Commentary by Peter Chalk,[9] a small island in the Andaman Sea serves as an important LTTE naval base used to train the group's Sea Tiger Wing. Unconfirmed reports [10] indicate that cadres of foreign terrorist groups like Free Aceh Movement (GAM), Karen National Army (KNU) and Shan State Army (SSA) had also been trained there supposedly under the LTTE guidance. The seizure of a LTTE trawler carrying Carl Gustav rocket launchers in January 2000 near Ranong, revealed a link-up among the LTTE, anti-Yangon Karen guerillas and the Arakan Liberation Party. [11]

The relaxed domestic laws and atmosphere of official corruption provide safe heavens for foreign terrorist organizations like the LTTE to continue their operational activities in the region. Thailand had been one of such oasis for the LTTE. The active

involvement of corrupt Thai officials was exposed in the arrest of three LTTE operatives in Ranong Province in May 2003 which was followed up with 14 more arrests of Thai nationals. The Tiger operatives were caught with sophisticated Glock and HK Mark pistols. More interestingly, eight of these Thais were police and military officials who have either allegedly smuggled the weapons out of their armouries or assisted this smuggling. Christy Reginold Lawrence, a Norwegian based Tamil was imposed a fine of 6000 Baht and deported to Norway after he was arrested in April 2000 by the Phuket Marine Police after discovering in his shipyard Seacraft Co. Ltd, a half-built mini submarine that could be used for a major suicide mission with two - three persons. . Sophisticated sonar and GPS systems, satellite phones, combat training videos and calendars of the LTTE and uniforms were among the items confiscated. Following a court case Lawrence was deported to Norway and the half-built mini submarine was handed back to the shipyard, since building a submarine was not an offence in Thailand

Intelligence officials in Colombo believe that the Tigers are into computer piracy and other software related crimes as well.[12] Anthony Davis of Jane's Intelligence Review (March 01) wrote that the LTTE has launched a massive procurement program in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. This extensive campaign involves accelerated purchase of dual-use technology and sophisticated communications equipment suitable for use both at sea and onshore. This is basically to rebuild its Sea Tiger strength that had been destroyed by recent tsunami attack.

The LTTE also carries out clandestine operations like human smuggling and narcotics transportation in Thailand on a large scale. Another significant development was the unearthing of a massive network of human smuggling of the LTTE with the arrest of Kanagasabai Sabananthan (41) with some 700 forged passports from a wide range of countries along with rubber stamps and other counterfeiting paraphernalia. Intelligence agencies believe that Thailand has become a global centre for international travel document forgery and human smuggling operations. [13]



The half-built LTTE mini submarine captured in Phuket, Thailand

## **Laos**

The Sri Lankan government and the Laos Interior ministry were alarmed by the Russian authorities when two LTTE members attempted to purchase light weapons and anti-aircraft guns from 'Rosboronoexport' - the state owned weapons seller of Russia. The LTTE operatives in Cambodia [14] approached representatives of 'Rosboronoexport' in Laos to seal the deal. Investigations have so far failed to unearth substantial evidence on a permanent LTTE base in Laos, but officials are of the view that the country is heavily being used for human smuggling and drug trafficking operations of the LTTE.

## **Myanmar**

When the LTTE's clandestine operations in Myanmar were exposed in the mid-1990s, followed by efforts of the Sri Lankan government brought some results when Rangoon took initiatives to close the base on its soil in 1996. However, investigators believe that Myanmar has not been eliminated from the LTTE's naval route of narcotics and arms. Intelligence officials in Colombo believe that the LTTE operations have been moved out of Rangoon and relocated the south of Myanmar, but no concrete evidence exists to establish the veracity of these claims.

## **Cambodia**

Cambodia, for many years, has been the main 'epicentre' of operations of the LTTE in Southeast Asia. Their activities facilitated by the corrupt nature of the governing system and the easy mobilization of locals cooperation in exchange for money, the Tigers have been operating from Phnom Penh under various covers for many years. For example, a famous Indian food center owned by Mariyampillai Lerins - a key operative of the LTTE in Phnom Penh - was functioning under the banner of the 'Rani Curry Leaf.' It has since disappeared, but the restaurant often changes its name and location, popping up from time-to-time totally as a new eating house. Another center of operation for the Tigers in Phnom Penh is DEBUG Computers, a computer cum communication outfit in the heart of the city. In fact, the two LTTE activists who approached the Russians in Laos to purchase arms were operating from this computer centre posing as employees of the institute. Investigations have revealed that many locals are assisting LTTE operatives in purchasing illegal arms. Bamboo Restaurant in Phnom Penh has also been identified as a Tiger front. This outlet has been used by many Tiger operatives as a gathering place at which Cambodian Tiger cells conduct clandestine meetings. Arms, logistical items, and drugs are commonly smuggled via Kong Island and Shinoukville Port of Cambodia.[15]

## **Vietnam**

Intelligence agencies in Colombo believe that the procurement activities of the LTTE in Vietnam are generally confined to general logistical items, through an active cell which functions under the cover of the Indian restaurant 'Ravi', 'Ronie' and 'Puvie' in Ho Chi Ming City. The latest consignment from Vietnam to Northern Sri Lanka has been raincoats that are being used by combatants. [16]

## **Malaysia**

The presence of a strong Tamil community in Malaysia has made the operational activities easier for the LTTE. It is believed that the World Tamil Organization, which has a strong base in Malaysia, consists of LTTE sympathizers. Top LTTE officials have allegedly contacted some leading figures in Malaysia following the signing of the peace Memorandum of Understanding in Sri Lanka and made requests for financial donations for the development of the Tiger-held North which received a positive response. Propaganda and fund raising activities are being carried out amidst the strict watchful eyes of the agencies, especially that of Special Branch of Malaysia. Most interestingly,

the clandestine operations and propaganda activities are being done through two different cells in Kuala Lumpur. The propaganda machinery and fund raising of the LTTE is run by an Indian Tamil while the other operations are done through an autonomous cell answerable directly to Wanni in Sri Lanka. Most of the activities are being conducted in Brickfield and Senthul of Kuala Lumpur and in Penang where a considerable Tamil community is present.

The LTTE's involvement in Malaysia in smuggling and human trafficking is significant; though the Tiger's maritime operations via Kuala Lumpur's West Port have been considerably reduced following the arrest of a LTTE vessel by Malaysian Special Branch in mid 1990. LTTE fund raising and human smuggling operations are still ongoing. The most recent episode is the alleged arrival of renegade Tiger leader Vinayagamurthy Muralitharan alias Karuna who challenged the leadership of Tiger Chief Prabhakaran April last year. A transaction of US \$ 300,000 has allegedly been done from Colombo to a Malaysian bank account before the defection of Karuna whose family allegedly stayed two months in Kuala Lumpur before reaching a western destination.

Dozens of Sri Lankans - from all over the country - are being smuggled into Malaysia through various routes on a daily basis. LTTE involvement in illegal migration may operate on two levels. The first involves bringing people into Malaysia with pledges of employment under a two-week tourist visa. The involvement of the LTTE of this category is not clear, although its expertise in document forgery are well known and a major line of LTTE operation. The second sector consists predominantly of Tamils whose ultimate destination is Canada, US or Europe. They transit through Kuala Lumpur using a Sri Lankan passport with a two-week tourist visa. Within a matter of five days these 'transit passengers' are provided with forged travel documents of their country of arrival - most frequently with Canadian passports. Malaysian security officials have yet to unearth this extensive human smuggling network of the LTTE. The banning of the LTTE in Malaysia has had limited effect. The statements of the Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs have not been backed up by a legal framework. While Malaysia says it follows the United Nations resolution 1267 on terrorism and the recognizes the US lists of terrorist groups, the LTTE in Malaysia has taken care 'not to cross the line.' The group recognizes that it cannot afford to lose the valuable operational sanctuary it currently enjoys in Malaysia.

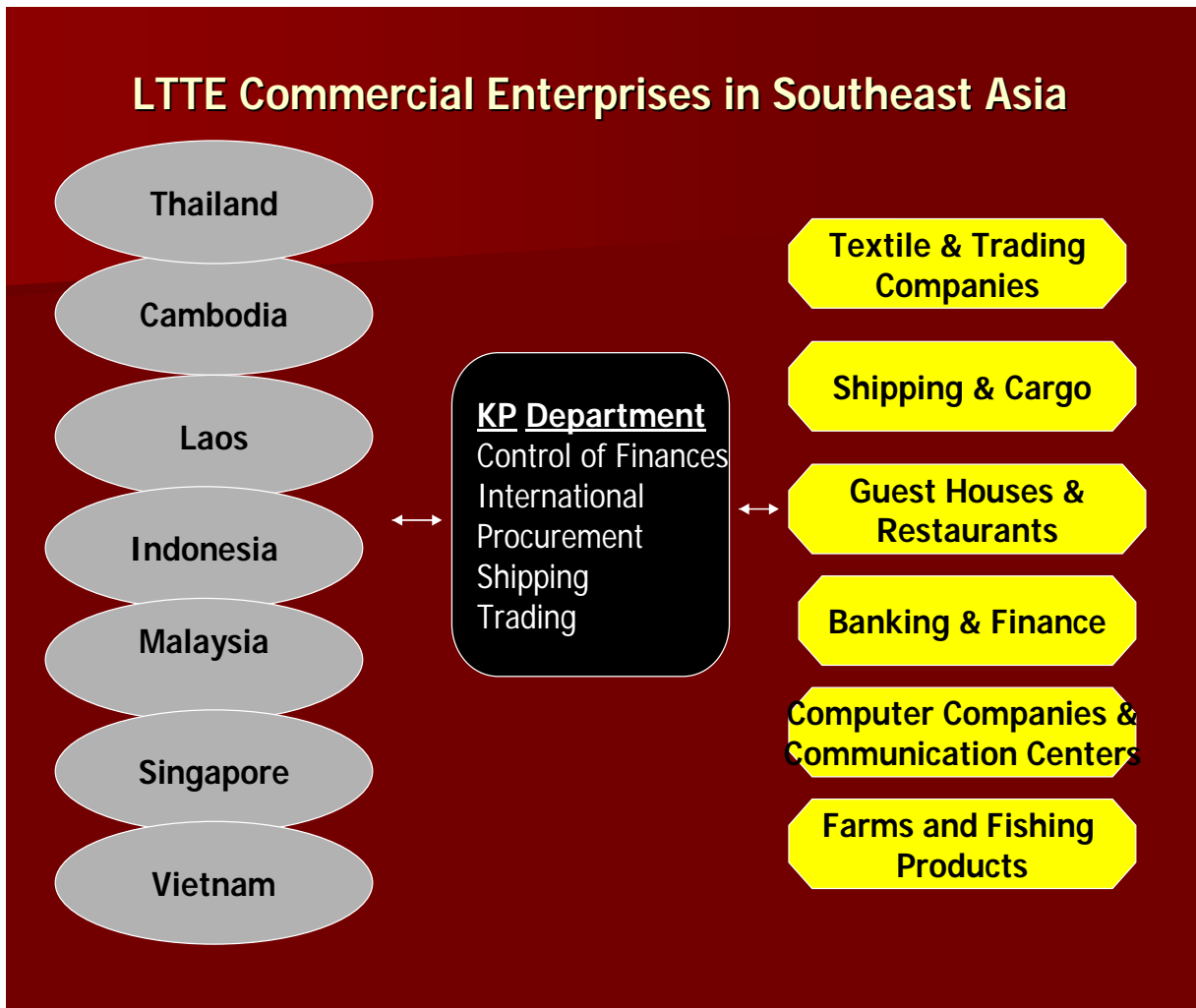
## **Indonesia**



The alleged links between the LTTE and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) has yet to be definitively established. However, intercepted telephone conversations by Tiger operatives in Cambodia and Thailand have revealed the existence of an operating unit in Jakarta. Recent visits by several operatives to the Indonesian capitol also indicate the existence of operational activity which could particularly relate to shipping. There is no confirmation with regard to the existence of their one-time front organization Jessindo Adhitama, PS Jembatan Merah, Block B, Los A No 99-100, Jakarta Pusat.[17]

## **Singapore**

Singapore has been a hub for LTTE's financial transactions and money laundering activities for the past two decades. Tigers established their first maritime and financial operations in Singapore in 1984. [18] As in Malaysia, the presence of a large Tamil community in Singapore has facilitated LTTE operations in Singapore. The liberal financial and commercial structure of the island-nation has created an environment conducive to many of its business transactions, money laundering activities, and maritime operations. However, in the post 9/11 period, increased vigilance against terrorist networks by Singaporean and other Asian authorities have created impediments to some Tiger activities. Nevertheless, LTTE money laundering and human smuggling operations have not been affected by these new developments.



#### **LTTE and Future threats to Southeast Asia**

The Southeast Asian region was, until recently, more concerned about economic stability than regional security issues. However, if the ASEAN nations are to establish the position of robust regional economic integration and global economic leadership that is its aim, regional security is of vital importance. Transnational security threats pose a long term threat to the the Southeast Asian progress. This could take many forms – crime, narcotics, maritime piracy, computer piracy, human smuggling, forging documents and money laundering. These transnational threats not only challenge the governments domestically, but also pose a real threat to regional frameworks on trade and security matters.

Terrorism has now become a decisive factor shaping the Southeast Asian security environment. The immediate responses to 9/11 did not create major re-adjustments in the geo-political situation in the region. Southeast Asian governments were still concentrating on strategies for economic recovery in the wake of the Asian financial crisis. In subsequent years, however, developments in places like Indonesia and Philippines have directed increased regional attention to these new security concerns.

In fact, the LTTE, with its highly networked 'octopus' styled international operations, demonstrates the links between transnational crime and terrorism. LTTE networking in Southeast Asia facilitates the smooth functioning of its global criminal enterprises. Although its prime political focus is limited to Sri Lanka, its ability to operate across geostrategically positioned Southeast Asia is vital to its ability to pursue its agenda at home.

The chances of the LTTE's involvements in active political campaigns or activities that could be detrimental to the sovereignty or the territorial integrity of the Southeast Asian nations are highly remote. Although there is a considerable presence of the Tamil community in Malaysia and Singapore, a politico-military involvement in those countries by the LTTE is unlikely. Still, its presence and clandestine operations could create unnecessary problems for the Tamil community in the region, build political momentum for the LTTE and pose a severe threat to the stability of the regions. Its operations may take a number of forms:

1. Training insurgency and terrorist groups and sharing expertise has already become a lucrative source of income for the LTTE. In particular, their expertise in suicide terrorism provides useful case studies for terrorist groups operating in the world today. The LTTE's multi-level operational network is suspected to have links to many other terrorist groups operating in Southeast Asia. Philippine intelligence authorities twice informed their Sri Lankan counterparts regarding information concerning LTTE training cadres training MILF members in handling explosives and probably also in conducting suicide missions. These LTTE members are suspected to be dispatched from its cells in Cambodia and Thailand. However, Sri Lankan authorities have yet to ascertain whether these Tiger cadres operating in Southeast Asia acted on their own or under instruction from their leadership in northern Sri Lankan jungles. There is also evidence of LTTE cooperation with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), New Mon State Party

(NMSP), the Karen National Union (KNU), the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) and the Shan State Army (SSA).[19]

2. The LTTE has been successful in launching several successful maritime attacks against Sri Lankan naval forces. Typically suicide in nature, the LTTE's most powerful Sea Tiger wing has been instrumental in these surprise attacks which provide operational models for other groups which are drawing plans for suicide maritime attacks specifically in the Southeast Asian waters. The suspected links between the LTTE and several Southeast Asian groups like MILF and GAM point to the need to be vigilant concerning the possibility that the maritime capabilities of the Tigers might be exploited by other groups in launching ruthless maritime attacks.
3. Narcotics and the nexus with international crime: The involvement of the LTTE's 'phantom fleet' in drug trafficking in Southeast Asian region is significant and extensively linked to the international drug- and crime-cartels by its very nature. The LTTE is benefiting from the highly organized drug trafficking network between South and East Asia, especially between the Gold Crescent of Iran and Pakistan and the Golden Triangle with Thailand and Myanmar. Given its huge profit margins, the lucrative drug trafficking business has been able to fuel the longstanding instability in Northern parts of Sri Lanka. At the same time, the continuation of drug related crime can continue to destabilize Southeast Asian security and economic recovery.
4. The LTTE has been implicated in international arms smuggling and is known to have made shipments to several international terrorist groups, including to the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen of Pakistan which is a member of the Al'Qaeda-linked International Islamic Front. It is not unreasonable to assume that Al'Qaeda and other terrorist groups have taken notice of the LTTE's use and manipulation of the maritime trading network for their purposes. [20] This factor has significant and disturbing implications for the long term security of the region. The operations of terrorist groups operating in the region could easily be facilitated by LTTE's large fleet of ships that are freely moving in the South China Sea for transporting arms and ammunitions.

5. The capture of Sri Lankan Tamil Kanagasabai Subanathan in Bangkok along with 700 forged passports carrying stamps of emblems of many countries unearthed a massive network of human smuggling by the LTTE in the region. In fact Southeast Asia, especially Thailand and Malaysia, has become a global centre for the Tigers' human smuggling and document forgery operations. The LTTE has demonstrated its capability to function at a mass scale without triggering the notice of local and regional authorities. In Malaysia, there are at least a dozen of cases of document forgery per month, mainly with regard to Sri Lankans, but concerted efforts to curb the network have not emerged. The involvement of the LTTE in human trafficking is significant and it has thus far excelled in outsmarting legal boundaries and security agencies. This situation could trigger important political, economic, and security concerns if urgent attention is not paid.
6. The LTTE has global networks of money laundering with Singapore providing a vital hub in the Southeast Asian region. The highly sophisticated network mainly follows the informal 'Hawala' style of financial transactions, a mechanism that has successfully functioned below the 'radar' of financial regulatory institutions. Most importantly, the illegal foreign exchange 'outlets' in Colombo have direct links to financial information systems in Singapore that update the US dollar rate three times a day. These links enable the daily collection of US dollars on Colombo's financial 'Black Market' to be immediately dispatched to Singapore using 'undercover' means.[21]
7. The LTTE's unquenchable thirst for funds raises the real possibility that it might diversify into mercenary/terrorist operation in the Southeast Asian region. The Tigers are fully equipped with the expertise, capabilities, facilities and knowledge to launch a lethal attack using a vessel as a weapon, using a vessel to launch an attack or sinking a vessel to disrupt infrastructure. The LTTE had been examining for many years the possibility of an explosive-laden suicide bomber piloting a microlite aircraft crashing on a land or sea-based target [22]. The LTTE has a proven capacity to conduct such a lethal attack as demonstrated through many of their earlier strikes against the Sri Lankan Naval forces.
8. The latest LTTE fund raising enterprise is intellectual property piracy, especially computer software and related products. Though it cannot match the skills of

ethnic Chinese in this sector, the LTTE could play a major role in computer related pirated products in the region.

## **Observations**

The example of the LTTE demonstrates that the conventional military mode of handling the menace of terrorism is not sufficient in light of the present multi-dimensional context of transnational terrorism. The multi-faceted threat requires multi-faceted responses that go beyond military means. A socio-political process to address the grievances of the affected people is of immense importance. Also a comprehensive work plan to marginalize the terrorists at international level is compulsory in dealing with terrorism. Most importantly, the counter-terrorism strategies that are being adopted by the US and its allies in the West should not be duplicated in total and in its rough form in Southeast Asia. Every step of the process should be re-moulded according to the unique cultural, political and socio-economic factors of the region. These human elements [23] should play a vital role alongside the high technology and other techniques of counter terrorism. The counter-terrorism agencies should be restructured with special emphasis on areas like high standards of public relations, language capabilities and deep knowledge of socio-political and cultural systems in different parts of the world.

A revolution in the entire structure of the global intelligence community is also crucial to effectively tackling the transnational nature of terrorism. The operations of individual nations should be networked. A close relationship and effective coordination going far beyond the usual norms of intelligence sharing are imperative. Especially the setting up of a well-networked Asian intelligence umbrella institution is of paramount importance. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) could provide the foundation for initiating such an entity. Close cooperation and coordination with extra-regional nations is also important. Indian intelligence, for example, is crucial when dealing with the LTTE. Indian agencies have a key role to play in this aspect. Indian naval exercises, such as recent naval patrols and exercises through the Strait of Malacca and into South China Sea would be a better option to counter the LTTE's highly sophisticated maritime activities. The Indian role is also important due to the fact that the Sri Lankan agencies could not be actively involved in anti-LTTE operations due to the ongoing peace process in the island nation.

The international community should also be vigilant on the developments with regard to the peace process in Sri Lanka and the commitment of the LTTE to good-faith participation in the process. Sri Lanka has no military solution its longstanding conflict. Politics, both on the local and international levels, must play the role in keeping the LTTE critically and seriously engaged in the process. Crushing the sophisticated fund raising network of the LTTE on international level is the paramount in the success of the peace process in Sri Lanka. This would not only bring peace to the Indian Ocean island, but also would strengthen the stability of Southeast Asia. Any measure to address this situation would require a firm political will and political capital. The laxity of political commitment and will to rectify the situation has become significant hindrance in the contemporary battle against terrorism. Politicians who seek short term political gains tend to ignore long term provisional steps that require in addressing the aggravating situation.

Lastly, I would suggest the establishment of a well-networked strategic center that would actively engage in serious academic research work within an Asian perspective. This would facilitate governments, agencies, academic institutions and public at large in analyzing situations, assessing threats and strategic planning on counter terrorism issues in Southeast Asia. Such an effort should extend its horizons from the traditional norms of combating to a fully fledged politico-academic strata.

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## **The Anatomy of the Terrorist Threat in Southeast Asia**

Maria Ressa

Thank you for inviting me to this conference. It is a chance to see old friends, talk obsessively about the topic that made us friends and compare our ideas on where we are today in the regional war on terror. My experiences in this field come from experience – I've lived in Southeast Asia for nearly two decades, most of that reporting for CNN. I could not have come to these conclusions if I hadn't been there – at every bombing attack, at every riot. I lived through it. That's my foundation, and perhaps the reason I remain obsessed with this topic.

My ideas are also the result of about three years of research after the September 11 attacks, of sifting through documents from intelligence agencies across the region and other western countries, including Canada and the United States. Working on finding these links between our homegrown groups in Southeast Asia and Al-Qaeda showed me a lot: the gaps in communication, how crucial information could sometimes get lost – not just between nations, but within each country ... not because of any grand design, but because the bureaucracy wasn't set up to handle it. Immediately after 9/11, everyone was scrambling to get information, trying to reorganize to help information flow, but although it's gotten better, I think there's still a long way to go.

September 11 changed the world because it ripped off a veneer – a collective lie we had built in the West of post-Cold war peace – and exposed what had been going on beneath the surface worldwide: how the growth of radical Islam had been hijacked and fuelled by groups like Al-Qaeda to build a global terrorist network.

9/11 changed not just the way I look at the world today, but the way I looked at the past – events of senseless violence I'd lived through now made sense as I went back and traced their connections to this global jihad.

When I saw the first plane crash into the World Trade Center, it was familiar. I remembered this from somewhere. It took the second plane crash to jar my memory. I remembered a terrorist plot discovered in the Philippines in 1995 so fantastic no one reported it, not journalists like myself, not the FBI, not the CIA. As it later turned out, Philippine police busted one of the first Al-Qaeda cells in Southeast Asia. The names are now familiar: Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind behind the first World Trade Center attack in 1993; his uncle, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who carried out his nephew's vision of destroying the World Trade Center towers. These men in 1995 were in the Philippines plotting to assassinate the Pope, Bill Clinton. The plot we all reported then was Oplan Bojinka – a plot to bomb US airplanes flying from Asia. The plot we ignored because it seemed too fantastic – to hijack commercial planes and crash them into buildings. The targets in 1995: the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, the Sears Building in Chicago and the TransAmerica building in San Francisco.

I filed that report less than a week after 9/11. It was quickly downplayed by US officials. The FBI denied it had the information Philippine authorities told me they had passed on – a position the FBI later reversed. The world moved on, but I couldn't. It was the beginning of the dual realities I began to see: the gap between the public rhetoric of government officials and the reality I began to piece together because I had lived through it. This frustration built because I saw that gap in country after country I was reporting from: in Indonesia leading up to the Bali blasts in Oct 2002, in the Philippines when it came to pinpointing the terrorist links of the country's largest Muslim separatist group, the MILF and the Abu Sayyaf.

I had another personal reason for pursuing this story. Soon after 9/11, CNN discovered hundreds of tapes from Afghanistan – many of which I watched with Rohan Gunaratna. He says it was the private collection of Osama bin Laden. CNN asked me to come to Atlanta to screen the tapes, look for any familiar faces from my part of the world. I went through 270 odd tapes in about 4 days. Around 2am on the second day, I played a tape of news pieces Al-Qaeda was interested in: I saw events in Chechnya, the bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen. Then I heard my voice. Osama bin Laden or one of his associates had taped my reports from the Philippines in 1995. I realized - they watch the news to see what authorities know about their plots.

Another tape we discovered from that stash showed me another tactic: a propaganda video that was used to incite jihadists to violence. All in Arabic, it showed

video of Muslims being beheaded, being attacked in Indonesia, and pushed the viewer to join the jihad. It was extremely emotional, very manipulative and well-produced – with music scoring, Arabic chanting. Except I recognized the events because I had been there.

It was in West Kalimantan, Indonesia – in ethnic violence between the Dayaks and the Madurese. The Dayaks were the old headhunters of Borneo. Now they had to deal with economic jealousies: their land invaded by Madurese transmigrants brought to Kalimantan under Suharto's land reform program.

In one weekend, I saw about 8 people beheaded. It isn't what you'd expect. I remember walking onto a field watching boys play soccer. It seemed like a party. Everyone was having fun – cheering and jeering as they passed the ball around. Except when I got closer, I realized the ball they were using was the severed head of an old man.

These events I had lived through were used in the Al-Qaeda videotapes – described as “atrocities committed by the infidels.” Those tapes showed me how Al-Qaeda worked: it twisted the truth. Al-Qaeda is incredibly sophisticated and manipulative, extremely personal in approach. And in all their claims, there is always a seed of unavenged truth. Like in this one – the Dayaks were Christians, the Madurese Muslims.

Tracing Al-Qaeda's links became an obsession. My discovery of their network in Southeast Asia changed me as a journalist. It was like building links in a chain: each link led to the next, and forging the chain meant revisiting many of the stories I had reported over the past decade: particularly those that struck me as instances of irrationality and senseless violence. For the first time, I began to see WHY events had happened the way they did. And that changed my picture of the world.

It became the glue that held together individual news events – like the bombing of the Philippine ambassador's house in Jakarta in Aug 2000. A week after that, a source told me the detonator had the signature of the MILF. I kept a sketch of the man who allegedly left the explosive. Three years later, I pulled it out – it was identical to the picture of Fathur Roman Al-Ghozi, who had now been arrested in the Philippines. The links are clear – and they are there.

Al-Qaeda used the same strategy it used everywhere around the world: coopting homegrown organizations which have their own domestic agendas, but hijacking them into a global jihad.

The goal is simple: much like the communists did before them, they want global domination, power, using religion as a tool. If you look at it bottom up, the groups wanted to topple their own governments, get control of their land, set up sharia Islamic law, then stitch all these cells together to create one giant Islamic Caliphate.

How can these Al-Qaeda associate groups topple governments? By knowing the fault lines in their societies: the goal is to create chaos, then as the more organized group, exploit the situation and take control. That continues until today – in Ambon and Sulawesi in Indonesia, in the southern Philippines, perhaps in southern Thailand.

So where are we today? Still, some of the facts are unclear. Still, we have debate about what reality is. Is Jemaah Islamiyah really Al-Qaeda's arm in Southeast Asia? My answer to you is simple: it's like asking whether I'm American or Filipino – CNN or ABS-CBN. We want clear definitions when reality is not so clear, but actions are. JI and Al-Qaeda have different leadership groups, some common members ... all that is academic. What's important is that they share the same ideology and when Al-Qaeda needs something done in Southeast Asia, they turn to JI.

Since the war on terror began here, more than 300 JI members have been arrested. JI is in disarray, yet, the possibility of more attacks, I would argue, has increased with less central leadership. This, I believe, is exactly what we're seeing now – smaller, more frequent attacks in the region like the February 14 bombings in three cities in the Philippines and the outbreaks of violence in Indonesia in Ambon and Sulawesi.

Denial – from governments, from analysts - still continues – each country still looking out for its own interests, still little acknowledgement that what goes on in one affects us all. Indonesia remains the primary theater of operations, one major attack every year since 2002's Bali bombing, but there have also been an increasing number of attacks in the Philippines – and perhaps in southern Thailand.

In the past, the training was going on in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Now the main training ground and refuge of key JI leaders is the southern Philippines. In fact, I'd argue that JI's strategic base has now shifted to the Philippines. We know, from

intelligence reports, that JI continues to operate three training camps there, and that there may be up to 80 to 100 JI members there, including 7 high-ranking leaders, including Bali bombers Dulmatin, Umar Patek, the Ayub brothers, who set up Mantiqi 4, and Noordin Mohammed Top.

I'd like to point out four other disturbing trends:

- 1) The spread of JI bomb-making technology – car bombs and cell phone detonated bombs, are reaching more and more groups in the region. Thailand had its first car bomb attack on Feb. 17 in the south. Last year, nearly 600 people died in escalating violence in southern Thailand, the attacks and the bombs showing increasing sophistication, some triggered by cell phones. Although authorities have yet to reveal a direct link to JI, we know from interrogation reports of JI operatives, including Hambali, that JI has tried to recruit and infiltrate groups from the south.
- 2) There is growing radicalization of home grown groups, with JI actively pushing its agenda of sectarian violence. In Indonesia, we're again seeing recurring scenes of violence in Sulawesi and Ambon. In the Philippines, we know that JI members were instructed to more heavily coopt members of the Abu Sayyaf. This was revealed in court documents released in Indonesia. That means a new trend: the Abu Sayyaf and JI carrying out bombing attacks, like the Superferry bombing last year and the Feb 14 attacks – they were carried out by Abu Sayyaf members trained in the southern Philippines by JI. If you listen to the rhetoric from Abu Sayyaf leaders, they are no longer talking separatism alone; they are talking Muslim-Christian violence – something which has rarely happened in these conflicts.
- 3) JI is acting as a sort of uniting force for radical members of what were once separate groups. Last month, I spoke with an Indonesian JI member who said he was in the room when Abu Sayyaf leaders plotted an attack for the last week of March to hit three cities in the Philippines, including the capital. They gave P100,000 to a member of the MILF, to carry out the attacks.
- 4) Which brings us to the MILF. Officially, its members and the Philippine government say the MILF has no institutional links to JI. "The involvement of the MILF here is never on an organizational basis," said Undersecretary Ricardo

Blancaflor right after Rohmat was presented to the media. “Certain members may have cooperated but never the organization,” he added.

That is not true. The MILF’s former chairman, Hashim Salamat, established personal and institutional links to JI and Al-Qaeda – to the point that when Osama bin Laden needed more training camps in 1999, he called the MILF. According to interrogation reports of JI members arrested across the region, the links go right to the MILF’s Central Committee. Most recently, Zulkifli, the former head of JI’s operations in the Philippines, told Malaysian police that he was in charge of maintaining the program of cooperation between JI and the MILF. His interrogation reports, says International Crisis Group’s Sidney Jones, show that from 1994 until at least 2003, there was a clear institutional link between the two groups.

Yet, government negotiators say they believe MILF chairman Ebrahim el Haj Murad himself has no ties to JI and is serious about a peace deal. If that is true, then it brings up some disturbing questions: is the MILF playing both sides of the game? Or even worse, is it incapable of controlling its forces?

Regardless of the reasons, it’s clear JI members and affiliate groups are training in the Philippines inside MILF territory. As Singapore’s Home Minister Wong Kan Seng pointed out, there is “an urgent need to disrupt and dismantle the training sites in Mindanao.” After all, as long as the training continues, it’s only a matter of time before the next attack.

## **PART II**

### **LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS IN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS**





## **LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS IN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS**

Session two focused on issues related to the structure and function of the leadership cadres of terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia and their links to outside, international militant organizations. The papers and discussion centered on three questions: What are the most important characteristics of effective terrorist leaders? What have we learned from arrests of high level terrorist leaders in Southeast Asia since 9/11? And what are the distinctive characteristics of leadership structures in various terrorist organizations?

The most important role of the leaders of terrorist organizations is to provide the ideological and motivational center-of-gravity for the group. Thus, the most effective terrorist leaders have high credibility in both the operational and the religious dimensions. In Southeast Asia, the earliest leaders of terrorist groups emerged from among the several hundred Southeast Asians who returned after fighting in the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s. The prestige of this first generation of Southeast Asian jihadis was so high that they were able to attract followers and establish their ideological credentials without much formal religious education. This generation is gradually being replaced, or at least supplemented, by younger militants who are preparing for their future leadership roles by acquiring formal religious education, often in the Middle East – Yemin, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in particular. This shift may also reflect the organizational and recruiting structures of the Southeast Asian militant groups, which rely heavily on the use of small, religious prayer and study groups as a tool to indoctrinate and recruit new members. In such a structure, the personal charisma of individual group leaders must be backed up by the ability to project religious piety and knowledge in order to draw in curious and impressionable new recruits.

The major terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia have suffered substantial degradation of their leadership cadres in the face of the post-9/11 and post-Bali bombing crackdowns on violent religious and political organizations in the region. Unfortunately, one of the key lessons of the recent wave of arrests is that these organizations are more adaptable under stress and less centrally-controlled than was previously understood. Formal leadership hierarchies in fairly sophisticated organizations like Jemaah Islamiya (JI) have been disrupted across the region, yet terrorist operations continue. It seems that as the leadership at the top weakens, the operational and ideological initiative moves down the chain-of-command to the regional and local levels. This limits their ability to

conduct major, large scale-attacks like the Bali bombing, but it also makes the planning and operations of terrorist groups harder to track.

Carlyle Thayer uses the example of JI to highlight some of the current methodological limitations of the study of the rise and dynamics of terrorist leadership cadres. He begins by outlining the key characteristics of the global Salafi jihadist movement, which he agrees marks a fundamental departure from the historical patterns of political terrorist movements. The jihadist groups have adopted a fundamentally different strategy which aims to achieve local and regional political and national aims by first challenging the global status quo. In addition, they back their political agenda with an unprecedented degree of religious fanaticism. Still, Thayer challenges the al-Qaida-centric approach that focuses exclusively on the global jihadist movement at the expense of understanding local and regional trends. This, he warns, tends to de-emphasize critical local socio-economic factors that contribute to the rise of new terrorist leaders and work against the emergence of a global anti-terrorist environment.

Zachary Abuza uses the examples of the MILF, JI, and a number of smaller, local militant groups to demonstrate the extent to which the small-group dynamics of terrorist organizations shape their operational and ideological agendas. Changes in leadership, Abuza shows, lead directly to sometimes significant changes in ideology, challenging the conventional wisdom that the “global jihadist movement” shares a single agenda. While all these groups share some basic ideological precepts, generational change and widespread arrests of high eschalon leaders can lead to important shifts in the degree of radicalization. The new generation of terrorist leaders in Southeast Asia, frustrated with a lack of progress and exposed to more militant ideologies during their religious educations in the Middle East, are tending to adopt more radical and intolerant interpretations and Islam and more militant political and social agendas.

Rommel Banlaoi uses the example of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines to demonstrate the extent to which the leadership structures and linkages of terrorist organizations are evolving in response to counter-terrorism policies and actions. The threat from regional and local terrorist organizations, he argues, is constantly changing and presents a daunting on ongoing challenge to governments to adopt more comprehensive and adaptive approaches and strategies. The ASG, in particular, demonstrates the degree to which the rise and fall of leaders can directly affect the ideological agenda of terrorist groups – it has changed, over the short course of its

history, from a jihadist groups, to a criminal terrorism-for-profit enterprise, and most recently back to a jihadist group with missionary as well as operational ambitions. In fact, Banlaoi shows, the ASG has made effective use of the financial resources garnered in its kidnapping-for-profit operations to provide social and charitable services that, in turn, expand its support base at the local level. While it has made some strides in undermining the structure and operational capabilities of the ASG in recent years, the Philippine government will not shut down the organization entirely, Banlaoi warns, until it deals with the underlying dissatisfactions that feed its support and recruiting base.

## Leadership Dynamics in Terrorist Organizations in Southeast Asia

Carlyle A. Thayer

### Introduction: Methodological Problems

One key methodological problem associated with the study of terrorist organizations and their leaders is the lack of an agreed definition of what constitutes terrorism.<sup>1</sup> The international community, first through the League of Nations and then through the United Nations (U.N.) has failed in its attempts to adopt a convention defining precisely what is meant by terrorism. Other international organizations have fared no better. The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) also has been unable to reach agreement on a definition of terrorism. At the OIC extraordinary session held in Kuala Lumpur in April 2002, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir proposed that any deliberate attack on civilians (including those by Palestinian suicide bombers) should be classified as acts of terror. Delegates disagreed. In the final OIC Declaration on Terrorism they stated *inter alia*:

We reject any attempt to link Islam and Muslims to terrorism as terrorism has no association with any religion, civilization or nationality;

We unequivocally condemn acts of international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism, irrespective of motives, perpetrators and victims as terrorism poses a serious threat to international peace and security and is a grave violation of human rights;

We reiterate the principled position under international law and the Charter of the United Nations of the legitimacy of resistance to foreign aggression and the struggle of peoples under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation for national liberation and self-determination. In this context, *we underline the urgency for an internationally agreed*

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<sup>1</sup>See the discussion in Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, New York: Columbia University Press 1998, 13-44.

*definition of terrorism, which differentiates such legitimate struggles from acts of terrorism [emphasis added].*<sup>2</sup>

The OIC threw this “hot potato” back into the lap of the United Nations. This year, the Secretary General, Kofi Anan, proposed that the U.N. adopt an anti-terrorism convention that would define terrorism as any act that is “intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or noncombatants” to intimidate a community, government or international organization.<sup>3</sup>

Surprisingly, the United States government, the leader in the global war on terrorism, has not adopted a single comprehensive definition of terrorism. Terrorism is defined in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations,<sup>4</sup> but the State Department,<sup>5</sup> Defense Department<sup>6</sup> and Federal Bureau of Investigation<sup>7</sup> all have their own separate definitions. President George W. Bush added yet another definition when he issued Executive Order 13224 (September 23, 2001) in the wake of 9-11.<sup>8</sup> One scholar has determined that

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<sup>2</sup>“Kuala Lumpur Declaration on International Terrorism,” adopted at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, April 1-3, 2002. [http://www.oic-oci.org/english/fm/11\\_extraordinary\\_declaration.htm](http://www.oic-oci.org/english/fm/11_extraordinary_declaration.htm).

<sup>3</sup>Colum Lynch, “Annan Drafts Changes for U.N.,” *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2005, A20.

<sup>4</sup>US Code of Federal Regulations defines terrorism as: “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85). See also: *Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the ‘Ngruki Network in Indonesia*, Indonesia Briefing, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 8, 2002, 19.

<sup>5</sup>US Department of State defines terrorism as: “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”

<sup>6</sup>US Department of Defense defines terrorism as: “The calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.”

<sup>7</sup>The Federal Bureau of Investigation uses the definition of terrorism contained in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations cited in note four above.

<sup>8</sup>According to the Executive Order on Financing Terrorism (September 24, 2001), terrorism “(i) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life, property, or infrastructure; and (ii) appears to be intended – (a) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; –(b) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or –(c) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, kidnapping, or hostage-taking.”

various agencies of the U.S. Government employ nineteen separate definitions of terrorism.<sup>9</sup>

Under the terms of Executive Order 13224, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Attorney General, has been given the authority to designate “foreign individuals or entities” that threaten the security of the United States as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO).<sup>10</sup> The USA Patriot Act of 2001 authorized the Secretary of State to designate terrorist organizations for immigration purposes. This authority is known as the Terrorist Exclusion List (TEL).

In the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the U.N. adopted Resolution 1267 that made provision for the United Nations Monitoring Group to maintain a consolidated list of entities and individuals that were part of or associated with the Taliban and al Qaeda.<sup>11</sup> The United Nations has designated only three terrorist organizations currently operating in Southeast Asia: al Qaeda, Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). All members of the U.N. are obligated to comply with this resolution but implementation has been spotty. Indonesia, for example, has not outlawed JI. In 2004, Indonesia’s new president, Sisilo Bambang Yudhoyono, indicated his willingness to submit legislation to Parliament banning JI but only if proof is provided that the organization exists. The U.N. list is not a comprehensive database of terrorists or terrorist organizations found across the globe.<sup>12</sup>

There are differences between the U.N. and the U.S. lists pertaining to terrorist groups active in Southeast Asia. The United States includes al Qaeda, Abu Sayyaf Group and Jemaah Islamiyah on its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (December 30, 2004)

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<sup>9</sup>Nicholas Perry, “The Numerous Federal Legal Definitions of Terrorism: The Problem of Too Many Grails, *Journal of Legislation* [Notre Dame School of Law], 30, Spring 2004, 249-274.

<sup>10</sup>See discussion in *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, Asia Report No. 80, Singapore and Brussels: International Crisis Group, July 13, 2004, 1.

<sup>11</sup>The U.N. resolution is binding on all members. The current list contains the names of 272 persons associated with al Qaeda and the Taliban. *Second Report of the Monitoring Group, pursuant to resolution 1363 (2001) and as extended by resolutions 1390 (2002) and 1455 (2003) on Sanctions against al-Qaida, the Taliban and their associates and associated entities*, 2003. See discussion in *Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, Asia Report No. 54, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 11, 2002, 1.

<sup>12</sup>In 2003, a U.N. monitoring committee found that 108 states failed in their responsibility to report the names of suspected terrorists to the U.N. Betsy Pisik, “108 Nations Decline to Pursue Terrorists,” *The Washington Times*, December 2, 2003.

as well as the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army. The U.S. Terrorist Exclusion List (December 30, 2004) adds the Alex Boncayao Brigade, New People's Army, and The Pentagon Gang.<sup>13</sup>

The scholarly community is equally divided on this question. One writer has identified 109 different definitions used in the academic literature.<sup>14</sup> Scholars specializing on Southeast Asia have been free to pick and choose which Islamic militant groups to include in their analysis.<sup>15</sup> In most cases little or no justification is given for their inclusion of a particular group as a terrorist organization. It often appears that if a militant Islamic group engages in political violence and has linkages to al Qaeda it is uncritically classified as part of al Qaeda's international network. For purposes of analysis this paper defines a terrorist organization and its leadership as those individuals and groups that have been proscribed by the international community through the United Nations and are currently active in Southeast Asia.

Two of the three groups proscribed by the U.N. – al Qaeda and JI – also constitute core components of what Marc Sageman<sup>16</sup> has termed the global Salafi jihad.<sup>17</sup> This term

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<sup>13</sup>See discussion in *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, Asia, 7.

<sup>14</sup>Alex P. Schmid and A. J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*, Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005.

<sup>15</sup>David Wright-Neville, *Losing the Democratic Moment? Southeast Asia and the War on Terror*, Working Paper No. 110, Perth: Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, October 2004, 6-8. Defining what constitutes a militant Islamic group is problematic as well. The security literature that discusses terrorism and Islam in Southeast Asia employs a number of descriptors such as fundamentalist, deviationist, radical, militant, Islamist and extremist. Often these terms are undefined and used interchangeably. Militancy is often equated with terrorism. Quite often too, analysts fail to distinguish between Islamic fundamentalism, extremist religious views and political terrorism. For a discussion see: Carlyle A. Thayer, "Radical Islam and Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia," in Derek da Cunha, ed., *Globalisation and its Counter Forces*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, forthcoming 2005.

<sup>16</sup>Sageman is a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer who served in Islamabad from 1987 to 1989 where he worked closely with the Afghan mujahiden. He is also a forensic psychiatrist.

<sup>17</sup>Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, 1.

specifically excludes non-Muslim terrorists and Muslim terrorists involved in domestic insurgency and urban warfare against their own governments.<sup>18</sup> According to Sageman:

The global Salafi jihad is a worldwide religious revivalist movement with the goal of reestablishing past Muslim glory in a great Islamist state stretching from Morocco to the Philippines, eliminating present national boundaries. It preaches *salafiyyah*... the restoration of authentic Islam, and advocates a strategy of violent jihad, resulting in an explosion of terror to wipe out what it regards as local political heresy. The global version of this movement advocates the defeat of the Western powers that prevent the establishment of a true Islamist state.

Al Qaeda is the vanguard of this movement, which includes many other terrorist groups that collaborate in their operations and share a large support base... Salafi ideology determines its mission, sets its goals, and guide its tactics. What sets the global Salafi jihad apart from other terrorist campaigns is its violence against foreign non-Muslim governments and their populations in furtherance of Salafi objectives.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, according to Sageman, the global Salafi jihad is a new development in the history of terrorism because it combines fanaticism (excessive enthusiasm in religious belief) with terrorism against the “far enemy” (foreign governments and their populations) in pursuit of the Salafi objective of establishing an Islamist state.<sup>20</sup> Sageman’s use of the term Salafi may be viewed as an unfortunate case of inappropriate branding. The International Crisis Group, in a report on this subject, concluded that most Indonesian salafis find the terrorist bombing activities of JI as anathema. Further, salafism as a belief system “may be more of a barrier to the expansion of jihadist activities than a facilitator.”<sup>21</sup> Finally, “salafi jihadism” represents a radical fringe and is not representative of the Salafi movement more broadly. According to a recent study:

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<sup>18</sup>Sageman excludes the ASG on the grounds that it has lapsed into criminality and has lost the support of al Qaeda; *Understanding Terror Networks*, 64. In 1994 the ASG rebuffed Omar al Faruq who tried to forge an alliance with the MILF; see: *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 22.

<sup>19</sup>Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 1.

<sup>20</sup>Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 17.

<sup>21</sup>See: *Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don’t Mix*, Asia Report No. 83, Brussels: International Crisis Group, September 13, 2004.



In Indonesia, most strict salafists appear to regard the terrorist movement Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) with suspicion and contempt. They object to its clandestine nature and its practice of members swearing oaths to the JI *amir*. For purist salafists, allegiance should only be given to the *amirul Muslimeen* (*amir al-Muslimeen*), or “commander of the faithful” (i.e., leader of the global Islamic community), not to the head of a small covert group. They also reject JI’s interpretation of *jihad*, which sanctions terrorist attacks and the use of “martyr” suicide bombers. Most salafi leaders regard terrorists as *muharibeen* (those who cause harm on earth) and believe that the perpetrators of such acts should be punished by death. They further believe that death by suicide in a terrorism attack is a sin that precludes martyrdom. Finally, salafist groups condemn JI’s determination to bring down the “Muslim governments” of Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries, believing that Muslims are forbidden to rebel against their rulers, even if they are tyrannical and impious.<sup>22</sup>

## What Is Al Qaeda?

Ever since the events of 9-11, international terrorism experts and regional security analysts have analyzed the activities of militant Islamic organizations in Southeast Asia through what might be termed an al Qaeda-centric paradigm.<sup>23</sup> There are three key methodological problems in discussing the role of al Qaeda in Southeast Asia in this manner.<sup>24</sup> The first is how to best characterize al Qaeda as an organization. The second problem is how to account for change over time. The third problem is how to assess the

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<sup>22</sup>Anthony Bubalo and Greg Fealy, *Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia*, Lowy Institute Paper 5. Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2005, 78.

<sup>23</sup>For a critical evaluation of three main approaches to the study of terrorism in Southeast Asia – international, regional and country studies – see: Carlyle A. Thayer, “Political Terrorism and Militant Islam in Southeast Asia,” in Mohd. Shafie Apdal and Carlyle A. Thayer, *Security, Political Terrorism and Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, Trends in Southeast Asia Series 7, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003. 11-30; Carlyle A. Thayer, “Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” *Pointer: Quarterly Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces*, October-December 2003, 29(4), 53-62; and Carlyle A. Thayer, “Al Qaeda and Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” in Paul Smith, ed., *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to States and Regional Stability*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2004. 79-97.

<sup>24</sup>This section is drawn from Carlyle A. Thayer, “New Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” in Damien Kingsbury, ed., *Security Issues in Southeast Asia*, Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, forthcoming 2005.

question of agency in al Qaeda's relationship with JI and other militant Islamic groups in Southeast Asia.

International terrorism experts and regional security analysts differ in their characterization of al Qaeda as an organization. Zachary Abuza writes that al Qaeda is composed of a central leadership of around thirty individuals, an international network of twenty-four constituent groups, eighty front companies operating in fifty countries, and a membership of between 5,000 and 12,000 organized into cells in sixty different countries.<sup>25</sup> Finally, Abuza argues that "Al Qaeda was brilliant in its co-optation of other groups, those with a narrow domestic agenda, and in bringing them into Al Qaeda's structure."<sup>26</sup>

Jane Corbin and Peter Bergin,<sup>27</sup> argue that al Qaeda was run like a business conglomerate or multinational corporation under the directorship of Osama bin Laden. Bergin writes that al Qaeda was an analogue of the Saudi Binladen Group, the large construction company founded by Osama bin Laden's father:

[Osama] Bin Laden organized al-Qaeda in a businesslike manner--he formulates the general policies of al-Qaeda in consultation with his *shura* council. The *shura* makes executive decisions for the group. Subordinate to that council are other committees responsible for military affairs and the business interests of the group, as well as a *fatwa* committee, which issues rulings on Islamic law, and a media group.<sup>28</sup>

Rohan Gunaratna's characterization of al Qaeda's organization is less precise and more equivocal. On the one hand, he portrays al Qaeda in much the same terms as Corbin and Bergin. He notes that

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<sup>25</sup>Zachary Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, December 2002, 24(3), 429-430. This is repeated in Zachary Abuza, "Al-Qaeda Comes to Southeast Asia," in Paul J. Smith, ed., *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to States and Regional Stability*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2005, 40.

<sup>26</sup>Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror," 431; and Abuza, "Al-Qaeda Comes to Southeast Asia," 40.

<sup>27</sup>Jane Corbin, *The Base: Al-Qaeda and the Changing Face of Global Terror*, New York: Pocket Books, 2002, 33 and Peter Bergin, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden*, New York: Touchstone Book, 2001, 31. They both rely on the testimony of Jamal al-Fadl, a Sudanese defector.

<sup>28</sup>Bergin, *Holy War, Inc.*, 31.

in 1998 al Qaeda was reorganized into four distinct but interrelated entities. The first was a pyramidal structure to facilitate strategic and tactical direction; the second was a global terrorist network; the third was a base force for guerrilla warfare inside Afghanistan; and the fourth was a loose coalition of transnational terrorist and guerrilla groups.<sup>29</sup>

The first entity, the hierarchical leadership structure, consisted of an Emir-General, a consultative council (*shura majlis*), four operational committees (military, finance and business, *fatwa* and Islamic study; and media and publicity), and dispersed regional “nodes.” Gunaratna further notes that bin Laden directed the core inner group and that the operational committees ensured the smooth day-to-day running of the organization. An emir and a deputy headed each committee. The military committee, for example, was responsible for recruiting, training, procuring, transporting and launching terrorist operations.<sup>30</sup> Al Qaeda also ran its own internal security service and an extensive financial and business empire.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, Gunaratna asserts that al Qaeda “is neither a single group nor a coalition of groups: it comprised a core base or bases in Afghanistan, satellite terrorist cells worldwide, a conglomerate of Islamist political parties, and other largely independent terrorist groups that it draws on for offensive actions and other responsibilities.”<sup>32</sup> This amorphous portrayal of al Qaeda permits Gunaratna to include virtually all Islamic terrorist groups and militant Muslims into his definition of what constitutes al Qaeda. This is the main methodological weakness of the al Qaeda-centric paradigm.

Jason Burke presents a powerful critique of the al Qaeda-centric paradigm adopted by Bergin, Colvin, Gunaratna and other international terrorism experts.<sup>33</sup> Burke dismisses the notion that al Qaeda was “a coherent and tight-knit organization, with ‘tentacles everywhere’, with a defined ideology and personnel, that had emerged as early

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<sup>29</sup>Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 57.

<sup>30</sup>Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 58

<sup>31</sup>Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 60-69.

<sup>32</sup>Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 54.

<sup>33</sup>Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2003.

as the late 1980s.”<sup>34</sup> Burke argues that to accept such a view “is to misunderstand not only its true nature but also the nature of Islamic radicalism then and now. The contingent, dynamic and local elements of what is a broad and ill-defined movement rooted in historical trends of great complexity are lost.”<sup>35</sup>

According to Burke, al Qaeda, as it is popularly conceived, “consisted of three elements.” This tripartite division is essential to understanding the nature of both the ‘al-Qaeda’ phenomenon and of modern Islamic militancy.”<sup>36</sup> The first of these elements composed the “al Qaeda hardcore,” numbering around one hundred active “pre-eminent militants,” including a dozen close long-term associates of Osama bin Laden, many of whom had sworn an oath of loyalty to him. The inner core was comprised of veterans of the Afghan war or veterans of the conflicts in Bosnia or Chechnya. They acted as trainers and administrators in Afghanistan and on occasion were sent overseas to recruit, act as emissaries or, more rarely, to conduct specific terrorist operations. But, Burke cautions, “it is a mistake to see even this hardcore as monolithic in any way.”<sup>37</sup> The 9/11 Report concluded:

The inner core of al Qaeda continued to be a hierarchical top-down group with defined positions, tasks, and salaries. Most but not all in this core swore fealty (or *bayat*) to Bin Ladin. Other operatives were committed to Bin Laden or to his goals and would take assignments for him, but they did not swear *bayat* and maintained, or tried to maintain, some autonomy. A looser circle of adherents might give money to al Qaeda or train it its camps but remained essentially independent.<sup>38</sup>

The second element comprises the scores of other militant Islamic groups operating around the world. But, injecting another note of caution, Burke argues “a careful examination of the situation shows that the idea that there is an international network of active groups answering to bin Laden is wrong.” To label groups included in this second element as “al Qaeda” is “to denigrate the particular local factors that led to

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<sup>34</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 12.

<sup>35</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 12.

<sup>36</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 13. The quotations in this paragraph are taken from pages 13-16.

<sup>37</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 13.

<sup>38</sup>The 9/11 Commission, *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004, 67.

their emergence”.<sup>39</sup> Burke explains why this second element should not be included as constituting part of al Qaeda:

But, though they may see bin Laden as a heroic figure, symbolic of their collective struggle, individuals and groups have their own leaders and their own agenda, often ones that are deeply parochial and which they will not subordinate to those of bin Laden or his close associates. Until very recently many were deeply antipathetic to bin Laden. As many remain rivals of bin Laden as have become allies.<sup>40</sup>

The cases of Indonesia’s Laskar Jihad and Free Aceh Movement are instructive. Both received and held discussions with al Qaeda representatives and both rejected offers of support in order to retain their operational autonomy. Yet some regional security analysts invariably characterize Laskar Jihad as al-Qaeda-linked if not an al Qaeda-affiliate. The Free Aceh Movement is held suspect because several of its members reportedly have received training at “al Qaeda-affiliated” camps in the southern Philippines run by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).<sup>41</sup>

Burke’s third elements comprising al Qaeda consists of those individuals who subscribe to “the idea, worldview, ideology of ‘al-Qaeda’” in other words, “the vast, amorphous movement of modern radical Islam, with its myriad cells, domestic groups, ‘groupuscules’ and splinters...”<sup>42</sup> Burke rejects the al Qaeda centric paradigm that characterizes al Qaeda as an organization incorporating all three elements into its organizational structure. In his view, it is the hard core alone that comprises al Qaeda.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 14. In October 2004 Abu Musab Zarqawi pledged his network’s allegiance to bin Laden and al Qaeda. U.S. Intelligence analysts who have studied the flow of communications between bin Laden and Zarqawi have concluded both “are still independent operators rather than activists who have fully combined their efforts.” See: Walter Pincus, “Analysts See Bin Laden, Zarqawi as Independent Operators,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 2005, p. A15 and David S. Cloud, “Laptop in Iraq Militant’s Truck Aided Capture of His Aides,” *The New York Times*, April 27, 2005., internet edition.

<sup>40</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 14.

<sup>41</sup>Dana R. Dillon, “Southeast Asia and the Brotherhood of Terrorism,” *Heritage Lectures*, No. 860. Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, December 20, 2004, 3-4.

<sup>42</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 16 and 207.

<sup>43</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 207.

And as Reeve notes, “for many years al Qaeda was little more than an umbrella organization for various bin Laden projects.”<sup>44</sup>

The second methodological problem in discussing al Qaeda’s role in Southeast Asia is how to account for change over time. International and regional terrorism experts adopt an approach that can be characterized as “back to the future.” In other words, their analysis of al Qaeda’s operations in Southeast Asia in the late 1980s and 1990s begins with the events of September 11, 2001 and works backwards in an ahistorical manner. Al Qaeda is portrayed as a purposive organization, endowed with virtually unlimited resources, from the very start. It is as if Osama bin Laden’s announcement of the formation of the World Islamic Front declaring jihad against “Jews and Crusaders” where ever they are found, was made in 1988 not 1998. Jason Burke argues that al Qaeda as an organization was limited in time and space:

Something that can be labeled ‘al-Qaeda’ did exist between 1996 and 2001. It was composed of a small number of experienced militants who were able to access resources of a scale and with an ease that was hitherto unknown in Islamic militancy, largely by virtue of their position in Afghanistan and the sympathy of so many wealthy, and not so wealthy, Muslims across the Islamic world, though particularly in the Gulf.<sup>45</sup>

Burke’s view is echoed by the 9/11 Commission, which concluded:

In now analyzing the terrorist programs carried out by members of this network, it would be misleading to apply the label “al Qaeda operations’ too often in these early years [1992-96]. Yet it would be misleading to ignore the significance of these connections. And in this network, Bin Laden’s agenda stood out.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, it was only after bin Laden returned to Afghanistan in May 1996 that al Qaeda emerged as an international jihadist terrorist organization in its own right. In August 1996, al Qaeda shifted its focus from the “near enemy” and defensive jihad to

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<sup>44</sup>Simon Reeve, *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999, 170.

<sup>45</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 208.

<sup>46</sup>“The Foundation of the New Terrorism,” The 9/11 Commission, *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, 59.

“War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places (Expel the Infidels from the Arab Peninsula). According to Burke, once ensconced in Afghanistan, “[t]hey even had a country they could virtually call their own. There were thus able to offer everything a state could offer to a militant group by way of support.”<sup>47</sup> In Gunaratna’s assessment, “Al Qaeda became the first terrorist group to control a state.”<sup>48</sup> Al Qaeda played the role of “the state” by projecting its power and influence globally by using the huge financial resources and human capital available. In sum, al Qaeda facilitated a global terrorist network through funding, services and facilities but did not control or direct local agents.<sup>49</sup>

It is important to note that militants from Southeast Asia first journeyed to Pakistan in 1980 or at least eight years before al Qaeda was founded and eighteen years before bin Laden launched his global jihad. It was during this early period that Southeast Asians forged personal links with leading figures in the mujihaden. One particularly influential figure was Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a Pushtun warlord and leader of one of the four major mujihaden factions.<sup>50</sup> It was under Sayyaf’s patronage that key future leaders of the ASG and JI were trained at his camp in Afghanistan. Sayyaf provided training facilities to the bulk of Southeast Asia’s Muslim militants while bin Laden, along with the bulk of his supporters, was in exile in the Sudan (1991-96).

During his stay in the Sudan bin Laden “maintained guesthouses and training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These were part of a larger network used by diverse organizations for recruiting and training fighters.” Bin Laden also attempted to create “a base for worldwide business operations and for preparations for jihad.” A “large and complex set of intertwined business and terrorist enterprises” emerged. Increasingly, however, bin Laden began to encounter “serious money problems” as several of his companies ran out of funds. Bin Laden was forced “to cut back his spending and to

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<sup>47</sup>Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 16.

<sup>48</sup>Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, 62.

<sup>49</sup>Burke suggests that three models characterize al Qaeda’s organizational structure: a wealthy research university, a venture capitalist firm and a publishing house. In each of these three cases individuals, small companies and free lancers approach the institution to seek support and facilities for their ideas and proposals. Some are accepted and funded, others are not. Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 208-209.

<sup>50</sup>Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan. Salamat Hashim attended Al-Azhar University during 1959-69 and overlapped with Sayyaf. See: *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 3.

control his outlays more closely.” Bin Laden also wore out his welcome with the Sudanese government, which “canceled the registration of the main business enterprises he had set up” and “seized everything... [he] had possessed there.” According to an assessment by the 9/11 Commission, “Bin Laden was in his weakest position since his early days in the war against the Soviet Union.” When he left for Afghanistan in May 1996, he and his organization were “significantly weakened, despite his ambitions and organizational skills.”<sup>51</sup> The decision to relocate to Afghanistan resulted in the disengagement by many of his supporters some of whom went off in their own directions. It should be noted that bin Laden’s decision to leave the Sudan for Afghanistan and shift his main objective from the “near enemy” to the “far enemy” provoked grave dissension within the ranks of his supporters. According to Marc Sageman, bin Laden returned to Afghanistan with about 150 followers and “[m]any people stayed behind and left the jihad, which they believed was taking an uncomfortable turn. The return to Afghanistan was the occasion for another large purging of al Qaeda of its less militant elements, who hesitated to take on the United States, with whom they had not quarrel and no legitimate fatwa.”<sup>52</sup>

When bin Laden arrived in Afghanistan the country was embroiled in a civil war as the Taliban initiated its drive to power. Simon Reeve notes that bin Laden was “a powerful figure funding many Islamic militants, but his level of day-to-day control over al Qaeda must be questioned.”<sup>53</sup> Given the uncertainty of this period, Southeast Asia’s militants decided in 1994 to relocate their training camps to the southern Philippines.<sup>54</sup>

The “al Qaeda”-Southeast Asia relationship may be viewed as having passed through at least three distinct phases following the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. The first phase (1991-96) primarily involved the establishment of networks and provision

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<sup>51</sup>The quotations in this paragraph are taken from: The 9/11 Commission, *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, 62-65.

<sup>52</sup>Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 45. The 9/11 Commission Report observed: “some al Qaeda members viewed Bin Laden’s return to Afghanistan as occasion to go off in their own direction. Some maintained relationships with al Qaeda, but many disengaged entirely,” *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, 65.

<sup>53</sup> Reeve, *The New Jackals*, 192.

<sup>54</sup>In October 1984, Zulkarnaen ordered five JI members to go to Mindanao to set up a camp and train the MILF. The camp was up and running by April-May 1995. See: *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 14.



of training facilities in Afghanistan under Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. During this period bin Laden was in exile in the Sudan, individual contacts were initiated between Southeast Asian leaders and personalities affiliated with “al Qaeda”. Equipment and training assistance was provided to the ASG, JI and the MILF. During the second phase (1996-2001), the leaders of the MILF, ASG and the JI relocated to Southeast Asia. There was an intensification of links between them and the al Qaeda leadership. But it should be noted that two key leaders, Abdullah Sungar (the founder of JI) and Abdulrajak Janjalani (founder of the ASG) both died in the late 1990s.

The period after 2001 marks a third and distinctive phase. The U.S.-led attack on the Taliban regime and al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan in the final quarter of 2001, resulted in the death or capture of key al Qaeda leaders, and greatly degraded and disrupted al Qaeda’s international command and control structures. Al Qaeda members were forced to seek refuge in remote areas of eastern Afghanistan and in Pakistan’s North West Frontier. Other al Qaeda members dispersed overseas, including Yemen, Chechnya, Iran<sup>55</sup> and Southeast Asia. Since late 2001 the initiative for political terrorism in Southeast Asia has mainly rested in the hands of indigenous organizations with some collaboration with al Qaeda remnants left stranded in the region.

The third methodological problem is how to assess the question of agency in al Qaeda’s relationship Jemaah Islamiyah and other military Muslim groups.<sup>56</sup> International terrorism experts and regional security analysts are often ambiguous when they use the term “al Qaeda.” Who or what represented “al Qaeda” in its dealings with Southeast Asian militant groups in these formative years? What role did international terrorist

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<sup>55</sup>Jessica Stern, “The Protean Enemy,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2003, 82(4), 27-40.

<sup>56</sup>Gunaratna’s analysis is one dimensional. JI is uncritically described as an organization that has been “penetrated” by al Qaeda or as an al Qaeda “associate group”. Laskar Jundullah and the MILF are listed “[a]mong the parties and groups it [al Qaeda] has established, infiltrated, and influenced...” The question of agency is overlooked. An authoritative study concluded: “‘Laskar Mujahidin’ refers not to a specific organization but to a coalition of ideologically like-minded forces that probably included a few JI and DI [Darul Islam], Mujahidin KOMPAK, and some local groups...” See: Rohan Gunaratna, “Understanding al-Qaeda and Its Network in Southeast Asia,” in Smith, ed., *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia*, 70 and *Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, Asia Report No. 74, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 3, 2004, 6.

“freelancers” play?<sup>57</sup> And perhaps most importantly, who were the Southeast Asian leaders who joined the global Salafi jihad to become terrorists? And what factors account for their decision to do so?

## **Leadership Dynamics**

Marc Sageman provides perhaps the most insightful account into leadership dynamics among international terrorists in his study of the biographies of 172 individuals belonging to the global Salafi jihad. Sageman considers three main explanatory approaches to the study of why individuals join terrorist groups: (1) social background, (2) common psychological make up, and (3) particular situational factors at the time of recruitment. Sageman evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. He then constructs a theory of social networks to explain the dependent variable of why individuals become terrorists. Sageman’s study makes clear that the global jihad movement is historically unique when compared with other terrorist groups and that JI differs in significant ways from its terrorist counterparts elsewhere in the world.

*Social background.* In terms of geographical origin, of 172 persons in Sageman’s sample, two-thirds came from Saudi Arabia (N = 31), Egypt (24), France (18), Algeria (15), Morocco (14) and Indonesia (12). If the pattern of interaction among individual terrorists is used to discriminate among the sample, four large clusters emerge:

- Central Staff (al Qaeda leadership), 32 members;
- Core Arab States (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, Kuwait), 66 members;
- Maghreb Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia and well as migrants from these countries living in France), 53 members; and
- Southeast Asia (JI members from Indonesia and Malaysia), 21 members.

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<sup>57</sup>“There were also rootless but experienced operatives, such as Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who – though not necessarily formal members of someone else’s organization – were traveling around the world and joining in projects that were supported by or linked to Bin Laden, the blind Sheikh, or their associates,” The 9/11 Commission, *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, 59.

Indonesians form the majority of the members of the Southeast Asia cluster (12 of 21); other members include: Malaysia (3), Singapore and the Philippines (2 each), and Australia and Kuwait (1 each). Most of the members of JI were former students and/or staff at two boarding schools, Pondok Ngruki in Indonesia and Pesentren Luqmanul Hakiem in Malaysia, founded by the group's leaders. The Southeast Asia cluster is also the second oldest (formed in 1993), and developed in the 1990s when the leaders of JI were exiled in Malaysia. JI did not embark on terrorism until after its leaders returned to Indonesia in 1999.

Sageman included five variables in his analysis of social background factors: socio-economic status, education, faith as youth, occupation, and family status.

In terms of socio-economic status, the Southeast Asia cluster may be classified as solidly middle class. The Central and Core Arab clusters are similar and are skewed toward the middle and upper classes; while the Maghreb cluster is evenly divided between lower and middle classes.

The 172 individuals comprising the global Salafi jihad leadership came from relatively well-to-do families and were much better educated than the population at large in the developing world. Over sixty percent had at least some college education. They were a better-educated group than their parents. A sizeable proportion had experience living abroad in the Middle East and the West. They were able to speak several languages. The Central Staff cluster was the best educated. Eighty-eight percent had completed a college or tertiary education and twenty percent held doctorates.

The majority of Sageman's sample attended secular schools; only seventeen percent had Islamic primary and secondary educational backgrounds. It is significant to note that the Southeast Asia cluster was drawn mainly from religious studies, while terrorists in the other clusters undertook science, engineering or computer science courses. Of those who had an Islamic education, half were from Indonesia. The Indonesian network stands out among the other clusters with such a high percentage of its members the product of Islamic education.

In terms of faith as youth, thirteen of sixteen Central Staff were considered religious as children. The Southeast Asia cluster exhibited a similarly high pattern due to the boarding school experience of its members. The Core Arab cluster also showed early

religious commitment. The Maghreb cluster was an exception; its members were brought up in a secular school environment.

A very high proportion (75%) of terrorist leaders can be classified as professional (medical doctors, architects, teachers or preachers) or had semi-skilled occupations (police, military, mechanics, civil service, small business, students). The remaining one-quarter of the sample was classified as unskilled workers; here the Maghreb Arabs predominated.

In terms of family or marital status, seventy-three percent of the sample was married. All of the Central Staff and Southeast Asian leaders were married (data available on 37). These individuals were encouraged by their social networks to marry their colleague's sisters and daughters. These in-group marriages forged close religious and political relationships and thus contributed to the security of the group.<sup>58</sup> This marital profile is unique to the global Salafi jihad; most other terrorists were unmarried.

*Psychological explanations.* Sageman considered and rejected a variety of psychological explanations as factors explaining why individuals became terrorists.<sup>59</sup> His sample was relatively small; sufficient information was available on ten cases out of 172.

*Circumstances of joining the jihad.* Sageman considers five variables as part of this explanatory approach: age, place of recruitment, faith, employment, and relative deprivation. The average age when a person "joined the jihad"<sup>60</sup> to become a terrorist was 25.69 years. The Southeast Asian cluster had the highest mean age on joining, 29.35 years, followed by the Central Staff whose average on joining was 27.9 years.

Seventy percent of the terrorist leadership sample joined the jihad in a country other than where they had grown up. They were expatriates away from home and family – workers, refugees, students and fighters against the Soviet Union. The Central Staff members converted to global jihad while in the Sudan. Indonesian members of JI joined

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<sup>58</sup>See the discussion in *Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, Asia Report No. 63, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 23, 2003, 27-29.

<sup>59</sup>These factors included: mental illness, terrorist personality, pathological narcissism, paranoia and authoritarian personality.

<sup>60</sup>Sageman defines "join the jihad" as an individual's decision (as part of a group) to go somewhere for training – Afghanistan, the Philippines, Malaysia or Indonesia.

while living in Malaysia. With the exception of the Southeast Asians and the Saudis, most other terrorist leaders joined the jihad in the West – France, Germany or the United Kingdom.

In a significant finding, Sageman discovered that there was a decided shift in the degree of devotion to Islam in adulthood (greater than religious devotion as youths) by individuals prior to their becoming mujahedin. Ninety-seven percent of his terrorist sample adopted Salafi Islam before joining the jihad through exposure at mosques where religious leaders espoused the discourse of jihad.

Finally, Sageman considered the variable relative deprivation. The biographic data indicated that just before joining the jihad, future terrorists suffered from social isolation, spiritual emptiness and underemployment (lack of a full-time job). These became a source of grievance and frustration. Sageman concluded that his data supported relative deprivation as a necessary but not sufficient explanation of why the individuals in his sample turned to terrorism.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a full elaboration of Sageman's theory of social networks as the key variable in explaining why individuals decided to join the global jihad. In summary, Sageman argues that joining the jihad was a three-pronged process of social affiliation (social bonding) involving membership in "small-world" groups based on friendship, kinship<sup>61</sup> and discipleship. Over time members of these cliques experienced a progressive intensification of their beliefs and faith leading them to embrace the global Salafi jihad ideology. The next stage involved an encounter by the small group with a link to the jihad. The final stage involved intense training and voluntary recruitment usually marked by a formal ceremony (swearing an oath of loyalty).

Sageman's findings reject the arguments that individuals become terrorists because of top down recruitment and brainwashing. In his view, social bonds predating formal recruitment into the jihad are the crucial element of the process. Groups of friends that spontaneously assemble in mosques constitute the main venue for joining the jihad.

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<sup>61</sup>For example, Ali Ghufraon, his three younger brothers and the nextdoor neighbor were all involved in the 2002 Bali bombings.

## Jemaah Islamiyah

In terms of social network theory, a terrorist organization may be viewed as a network composed of individuals in small groups (relatively isolated nodes) linked by hubs (well connected nodes), a very important component of this network. According to Sageman, a few highly connected hubs dominate the architecture of the global Salafi jihad. But in the case of Southeast Asia one hub dominates the cluster – the leadership group around Abdullah Sungkar (until his death in late 1999) and then Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

Sageman's analysis of the historical formation of four terrorist clusters repeatedly highlights how different the Southeast Asia cluster is from the other global clusters along two dimensions. First, the bonding of students to their religious mentors, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, is particularly noticeable. Sageman findings thus underscores the importance of discipleship in JI's organization. Second, the Southeast Asia cluster is more hierarchical in leadership structure than the other clusters. JI's founder, Abdullah Sungkar, intentionally created JI from above.

According to the *General Guidelines for the Jemaah Islamiyah Struggle*, JI is led by an amir (initially Abdullah Sungkar) who appoints and controls four councils: governing council, religious council, *fatwa* council, and disciplinary council. The governing council is headed by a central command that oversees the leaders of four territorial divisions or *mantiqi*s. The *mantiqi* is subdivided into *wakalah*, *sariyah*, *katibah*, *kirdas*, *fiah* and *thoifah*. But in practice this structure was simplified to just three levels: *wakalah*, *kirdas* and *fiah*. The term *mantiqi* may be literally translated as region. But the International Crisis Group argues that it is more appropriate to view JI as a military structure with brigades (*mantiqi*), battalions (*wakalah*), companies (*khatibah*), platoons (*qirdas*) and squads (*fiah*).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>*Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, 11 and *Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 2, note 4. For variations see: Australian Government, *Transnational Terrorism: The Threat to Australia*. Canberra: National Capital Printing, 2004; Republic of Singapore, Ministry of Home Affairs, *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism*. January 7, 2003; Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 140; Abuza, "Al-Qaeda Comes to Southeast Asia," 44-45; and Rohan Gunaratna, "Understanding al-Qaeda and Its Network in Southeast Asia," in Smith, ed., *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia*, 70.

In its ideal form, JI comprised four major divisions as follows:

- Mantiqi 1 – Singapore, peninsula Malaysia and southern Thailand
- Mantiqi 2 – Indonesia (except Sulawesi and Kalimantan)
- Mantiqi 3 – southern Philippines, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, eastern Malaysia and Brunei<sup>63</sup>
- Mantiqi 4 – Australia and Papua

When JI was first set up it was organized into two mantiqi. Mantiqi 1 had responsibility for Malaysia and Singapore and was assigned fund raising as its major objective, while Mantiqi 2 covered Indonesia and was given the promotion of jihad at its prime mission. Mantiqi 3 was created in 1997 due to logistical and communication problems with existing arrangements. Mantiqi 4 was never established as a proper administrative or territorial unit. The International Crisis Group (ICG) asserts “a mantiqi based in Australia was never a going concern.”<sup>64</sup> According to Sageman, it was the central leadership that initiated, planned and executed operations. In this organizational sense, JI was a fairly traditional organization in contrast to the rest of the global Salafi jihad.

The ICG and its team of Indonesia-based researchers have produced a number of in-depth detailed reports on JI, its origins, its relationship to other Indonesian militant

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<sup>63</sup>Mantiqi 3 was only established in July 1997; see: *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 15.

<sup>64</sup>*Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, Asia, 2.

Muslim groups and JI's regional connections.<sup>65</sup> These reports challenge the “al Qaeda-centric paradigm” adopted by many international and regional terrorism specialists that “homogenizes” Southeast Asia's very diverse and complex political landscape.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>The most important of these reports are: *Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Violence in Maluku*, Asia Report No. 10, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 19, 2000; *Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims*, Indonesia Briefing, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, October 10, 2001; *Indonesia: The Search for Peace in Maluku*, Asia Report No. 31, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 8, 2002; *Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the 'Ngruki Network in Indonesia*, Indonesia Briefing, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 8, 2002; *Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, Asia Report No. 54, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 11, 2002; *Indonesia: Managing Decentralisation and Conflict in South Sulawesi*, Asia Report No. 60, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, July 18, 2003; *Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, Asia Report No. 63, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 23, 2003; *Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, Asia Report No. 74, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 3, 2004; *Indonesia: Violence Erupts Again in Ambon*, Asia Briefing, Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, ay 17, 2004; *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, Asia Report No. 80, Singapore and Brussels: International Crisis Group, July 13, 2004; and *Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing*, Asia Report No. 92, Singapore and Brussels: International Crisis Group, February 22, 2005. See also: Australian Government, *Transnational Terrorism: The Threat to Australia*. Canberra: National Capital Printing, 2004. For a critique of this report see: Carlyle A. Thayer, “Transnational Terrorism: The Threat to Australia, ”*What's Next?* [Perth: Future Directions International], October 2004, 12.

<sup>66</sup>Abuza, for example, states categorically that Laskar Mujahideen and Laskar Jundullah are paramilitary arms of JI and the Majelis Mujahideen Indonesia (MMI) is a JI front. Laskar Mujahideen is not an organization *per se* but a term used to describe a collection of militant Muslim groups. It may have had a few JI members (see note 53 above). Laskar Jundullah is the security force of the Committee to Prepare for the Upholding of Islamic Law. Its founder, Agus Dwikarna, was a member of Wadah Islamiyah who left this group in a dispute over whether or not to wage jihad in Ambon. The MMI was a broad based political coalition designed to rally support for oppressed Muslim communities abroad. Radicals within JI opposed its formation. See: Zachary Abuza, “Al-Qaeda Comes to Southeast Asia,” in Smith, ed., *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia*, 45-46; and *Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, 3-4. For a nuanced discussion of this issue see: Robert W. Hefner, “Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Assessing the Trends,” in *Political Islam in Southeast Asia*. Conference Report, Southeast Asia Studies Program, The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., March 25, 2003.



An ISG report issued in August 2003 concluded:

JI has elements in common with al-Qaeda, particularly its jihadist ideology and a long period of shared experiences in Afghanistan. Its leaders revere bin Laden and seek to emulate him, and they have almost certainly received direct financial support from al-Qaeda.

But JI is not operating simply as an al-Qaeda subordinate. Virtually all of its decision-making and much of its fund-raising has been conducted locally and its focus, for all the claims about its wanting to establish a South East Asian caliphate, continues to be on establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia... the emphasis on jihad in Indonesia remains strong.<sup>67</sup>

Elsewhere the same report offered this assessment:

Despite these clear ties, JI's relationship with bin Laden's organization may be less one of subservience, as is sometimes portrayed, than of mutual advantage and reciprocal assistance, combined with the respect successful students have for their former teachers.

One source familiar with JI described its relationship to al-Qaeda as similar to that of an NGO with a funding agency. The NGO exists as a completely independent organization, but submits proposals to the donor and gets a grant when the proposal is accepted. The donor only funds projects that are in line with its own programs. In this case, al-Qaeda may help fund specific JI programs but it neither directs nor controls it.<sup>68</sup>

In sum, the ICG reports and assessments by Western and Asian government analysts establish quite clearly that JI is "a stand-alone regional operation, with its own camps, recruiting, financing and agenda" autonomous from al Qaeda.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>*Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, 1.

<sup>68</sup>*Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, 30.

<sup>69</sup>Raymond Bonner, "Officials Fear New Attacks by Militants in Southeast Asia," *The New York Times*, November 22, 2003.

A second major theme developed by the ICG is that serious fissures developed within the JI leadership over differences about the organization's long-term goals and strategy. Broadly speaking, a group of JI militant radicals formed around Abdullah Sungkar. These comprised his former students including Hambali, Imam Samudra and Ali Ghufron. From the time Suharto's New Order collapsed this group advocated violent jihad. They cited bin Laden's *fatwas* of 1996 and 1998 as authority for the necessity to wage jihad in Indonesia in order to create an Islamic state.

When Abdullah Sungkar returned to Indonesia in 1999 he discovered that the leaders of Mantiqi 2 had an entirely different agenda. They wanted more resources and time to build up a mass support base through religious education and training. Leaders of Mantiqi 2 argued that there was no clear enemy in Indonesia and that it would be a mistake to expend limited resources on prematurely launching a jihad. The majority faction within JI viewed "the *fatwa's* implementation as inappropriate for Indonesia and damaging to the longer-term strategy of building a mass base through religious outreach."<sup>70</sup> They argued for a strategy of building up a core of cadres and set a target date of 2025 for the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia.<sup>71</sup>

Sungkar's disciples were dissatisfied when Abu Bakar Ba'asyir became JI's leader following Sungkar's death in November 1999. According to an ICG report, "[t]hey saw Ba'asyir as too weak, too accommodating, and too easily influenced by others."<sup>72</sup> In 1999, Hambali issued instructions to activate operational cells in Malaysia. These cells were ordered to commence planning for a series of high-profile attacks against selected western diplomatic missions in Singapore, U.S. military personnel in transit on short leave, U.S. warship in the Strait of Malacca, Changi airport and Singaporean defense facilities. JI emissaries went to Afghanistan to present their terrorist prospective to al Qaeda, but al Qaeda took no action.<sup>73</sup> Hambali was also involved in the Christmas church bombings in late 2000 (see below). Hambali's ambitious terrorist plans for Singapore

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<sup>70</sup>*Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 1.

<sup>71</sup>*Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 3.

<sup>72</sup>*Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, Executive Summary.

<sup>73</sup>Maria A. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, New York: Free Press, 2003, 144 and 155 asserts that Mohammed Atef "greenlighted the project" or Plan A (multiple bombings of targets in Singapore). When Plan A was disrupted by security authorities, Hambali developed Plan B, the Bali bombings.

came to an abrupt end when Malaysian and Singaporean security authorities conducted a series of arrests of JI suspects in 2001 and 2002.

The antagonism between the majority and extremist minority further intensified when Ba'asyir founded the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) in August 2000. Ba'asyir became so involved with MMI that he turned over day-to-day running of JI to an assistant (Thoriqudin alias Abu Rusydan).<sup>74</sup> JI's extremist faction argued that the JI should continue to pursue its aims as an underground organization. Even more importantly, JI's radicals objected to working with Muslim political parties that advocated Islamic law through elections and parliament because they viewed this as accommodation with a non-Islamic (Indonesian) state that would "contaminate the faithful" and was therefore forbidden.<sup>75</sup>

The eruption of sectarian violence in Poso in Central Sulawesi in late 1998 and in Ambon (Maluku) in 1999 also exposed the fissures that had developed in JI. It took the JI leadership a full six months to decide to send forces to Maluku. The conflict in Ambon revealed differences between Mantiqi 2 and Mantiqi 3. At a June 1999 meeting of JI leaders, for example, the head of Mantiqi 2 was heavily criticized for being "too slow and bureaucratic."<sup>76</sup> By the time Zulkarnaen, head of military operations for JI, was dispatched there were many other militant groups active on the scene.<sup>77</sup> Some members of JI even joined one of the local militia groups before JI had decided on its policy. JI's role was mainly confined to training. There were also leadership differences within each mantiqi.

The Bali bombings of 2002 created a deep rift within the JI leadership. Just prior to the bombings, Ba'aysir addressed several meetings of MMI-JI members and "argued strenuously that bombings and the armed struggle for an Islamic state should be put on hold for the time being because they would have negative repercussions for the

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<sup>74</sup>*Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 3, and *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 45, note 16.

<sup>75</sup>*Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, 4.

<sup>76</sup>*Indonesia Backgrounder: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 4.

<sup>77</sup>Zulkarnen heads JI's Special Operations Force, Laskar Khos, which emerged during the conflict in Poso in 2000. Members of Laskar Khos are drawn from individual cells sometimes for operations without the knowledge of their direct superiors in the chain of command.

movement.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, Ba’asyir’s objections were tactical. Ba’asyir’s advice was not accepted by JI’s radical extremist faction. Although they continued to show respect and acknowledge him as head of the JI, “the radicals began searching for new leaders closer to their way of thinking.”<sup>79</sup> JI’s extremist minority was responsible for the suicide bombing of the J. W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta in August 2003.

The break down of the 2001 Malino Accord and the eruption of violence between Christians and Muslims in Poso in October 2003 once again raised the issue within JI “over how, where, and when to wage jihad.”<sup>80</sup> But, as the ICG’s case study of jihad in Central Sulawesi makes crystal clear, JI is not a unified monolithic organization. The majority of members were mainly “focused of building up military capacity and creating a mass base through religious indoctrination to support what would effectively be an Islamic revolution in the country when the time is ripe...”<sup>81</sup> The minority faction was determined to attack Western targets (the “far enemy”) and were influenced by the *fatwas* issued by bin Laden. This split in JI pitted the leaders of Mantiqi I against those of Mantiqi 2.<sup>82</sup> The extremist minority continued to pursue their own agenda with a suicide bombing outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004.

A third major theme to emerge from ICG reports on terrorism and political violence is that “terrorism analysis in Indonesia has focused too much on JI to the exclusion of smaller groups with local grievances...”<sup>83</sup> With respect to the reemergence of sectarian violence in Poso in 2003, for example, the main instigators were local members of a militia group called Mujahidin KOMPAK. This militia was “spawned by but independent of JI.”<sup>84</sup> There were also many other local actors involved as well. This leads to the conclusion that just as with the case of the al Qaeda-centric paradigm, it is also a mistake to view political violence by militant Muslim groups in Indonesia through an exclusively JI-centric framework.

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<sup>78</sup>*Indonesia Background: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, 4.

<sup>79</sup>*Indonesia Background: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, 4.

<sup>80</sup>*Indonesia Background: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 1.

<sup>81</sup>*Indonesia Background: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 24.

<sup>82</sup>*Indonesia Background: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, 1. Mantiqi 1 was initially led by Hambali . He was replaced by Mukhlas after his capture in 2003.

<sup>83</sup>*Indonesia Background: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 1.

<sup>84</sup>*Indonesia Background: Jihad in Central Sulawesi*, 1.

JI turned to political violence in 1999 when it became involved in sectarian conflict in Poso (Central Sulawesi) and Ambon (Maluku) that had already erupted. These actions may be regarded as “defensive jihad.” JI turned to violent terrorism in 2000 when it attacked the home of the Philippine ambassador in Jakarta (August) and orchestrated a co-ordinated campaign involving thirty church bombings in eleven cities in six different Indonesian provinces (December). JI crossed over to global jihad in 2001 when it plotted to attack western embassies and military personnel in Singapore. When this plot failed JI extremists turned to softer targets – a bar and nightclub in Bali (2002), the J.W. Marriott Hotel (2003) and the Australian Embassy in Jakarta (2004).

## **JI: A Current Assessment**

JI’s organizational development, and regional outreach to likeminded militant groups in Southeast Asia, has been severely disrupted in Malaysia and Singapore due to the action by security authorities in 2001-02 and subsequently. Earlier, in July 2000, JI suffered a setback when its premier training camp in Mindanao was captured by the AFP. In Indonesia, each of the three major terrorist bombings (Bali, Marriott and Australian Embassy) has resulted in a round up of key suspects. Each wave of arrests has generated actionable intelligence that has resulted in further arrests.

The cumulative impact of these losses has impacted on all levels of JI’s organization and leadership resulting in a severe dislocation of JI’s internal structure. JI’s mid-level organization has been seriously degraded. JI has had to pare down the table of organization set out in its guidelines. The regional shura reportedly no longer functions and the mantiqi level of organization also reportedly no longer operates. By mid-2003, the JI had been so decimated by the arrest of its members that some wakalahs collapsed entirely. JI in Indonesia is now divided into four main groups: Lamongan, East Java; Semarang, Central Java; Banten, West Java and Poso, South Sulawesi.<sup>85</sup> The wakalah structure continues to function in Palu/Poso.

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<sup>85</sup>But JI cells reportedly remain active in Maluku, East Kalimantan and the Riau islands.

Jl has never had a strong financial base.<sup>86</sup> It relied heavily on public donations to support its operations in conflict areas such as Maluku and Sulawesi. The dampening down of sectarian conflict has closed off this avenue for mobilizing domestic funding. Jl was also the beneficiary of external funds, including al Qaeda,<sup>87</sup> channeled from Pakistan. Al Qaeda's demise after 2001, coupled with the separate arrests of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Hambali, has resulted in drying up of this source of funds. Jl's precarious financial position is now proving an impediment to its operations.<sup>88</sup> Jl, for example, is presently unable to support the families of all its arrested members. Some members of Jl have hired out their services to other militant groups. Other Jl members have taken to robbery to raise cash. But overall there is little evidence that Jl has become involved into criminal activities (narcotics trade, credit card fraud or people smuggling) in an organized and sustained basis.

In August 2003, Australian intelligence noted "a clear split between some Jl cells strongly pushing for a return to political agitation and propaganda and others that advocate nothing less than increased militancy."<sup>89</sup> These differences surfaced again in the wake of the suicide bombing outside the Australian Embassy when militants inside Jl criticized the planners for conducting an operation that resulted in mostly Indonesian deaths.

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<sup>86</sup>This paragraph draws on Anthony Davis, "Southeast Asia awaits Jl's next move," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 1, 2004, internet edition. For a pioneering study consult: Zachary Abuza, *Funding Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The Financial Network of Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah*. NBR Analysis, 14(5), December 2003.

<sup>87</sup>Al Qaeda funding has been marginal to Jl's operations. According to the ICG, Jl "almost certainly received direct financial support from al Qaeda... much of its fund-raising has been conducted locally;" see: *Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, 1. Jl reportedly received \$140,000 from al Qaeda over three years. The Australian government's White Paper, *Transnational Terrorism: The Threat to Australia*, 43, states it is "suspected that Al Qaida provided funding for the Bali bombings..." Some specialists state that al Qaeda provided \$30,000 to Hambali for the Bali attack. But these funds were insufficient, the Bali bombers, for example, had to rob a bank to finance their operation.

<sup>88</sup>Davis, "Southeast Asia awaits Jl's next move."

<sup>89</sup>Quoted in Martin Chulov and Patrick Walters, "Jl deeply divided on use of violence," *The Australian*, August 14, 2003.

According to a senior member of Australia's counter-terrorism effort, "JI has become a bit fractured from within"<sup>90</sup> with a disparate collection of cells working at cross purposes due to deep divisions over strategy and no clear leader. In August 2003, for example, the head of JI's military operations cell in Jakarta was planning to bomb the Bank Central Asia office, unaware that another cell was planning the suicide bombing of the J. W. Marriott Hotel. To take another example, although JI is able to recruit new members; some of JI's recruitment is being conducted by individuals who are deeply opposed to Hambali and targeting of westerners. In sum, new recruitment does not necessarily produce more foot soldiers for the radical extremists within JI. JI training activities are now being conducted on a reduced scale (in Sulawesi and Mindanao); the standard of this training does not match that which was offered in Afghanistan or at Camp Abu Bakar before it was overrun.<sup>91</sup>

Most recent reports indicate that JI's central command and top leaders are debating whether or not to return to sectarian violence by renewing attacks on Christian communities. Elements of JI's extremist faction were reportedly behind the recent upsurge in attacks in Maluku and Poso in the belief that more violence would attract more recruits and funding to the global jihadist cause. JI extremists have advocated extending sectarian violence to Malaysia and Thailand. In this respect, the speculation that Dr. Azahari bin Husin may have broken with JI to form his own group may be significant.<sup>92</sup> The Azahari clique drew in recruits from outside JI to execute the south Jakarta bombing outside the Australian Embassy. The suicide bomber was a member of Darul Islam.

In summary, JI has now become badly fractured organization in disarray. According to former JI regional leader, Nasir Abbas, now in custody, "JI is in ruins now. Anybody who was a JI member is no longer claiming to be a JI member now. Azahari

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<sup>90</sup>Chulov and Walters, "JI deeply divided on use of violence," *The Australian*, August 14, 2003.

<sup>91</sup>After JI's Camp Hudaibiyah, located within the Camp Abu Bakar complex, was overrun in April 2001, the JI relocated its training facilities to Camp Jabal Quba in the mountains; see *Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 13 and 17. Reportedly JI-MILF operate three mobile training camps at present.

<sup>92</sup>Shefali Rekhi, "Terror in South-east Asia," *The Straits Times*, October 25, 2004.

and Noordin are the most dangerous, but even they don't say they are part of JI now. There is no management, no administration anymore.”<sup>93</sup>

Finally, a net assessment of JI would have to conclude that JI has been contained but not eliminated. JI has been reconfigured into a loosely defined network of independent cells, which initiate their own actions, with intermittent contact with members of the central command. The streamlining of JI's organizational structure may have made the organization more difficult to identify and penetrate.

JI enjoys a range of contacts in Indonesia such as Laskar Jundullah in Sulawesi and Mijahidin KOMPAK in Java. JI's links with the MILF and ASG have not been severed; individual members of JI conduct joint operations with elements of these groups in the Philippines. And JI cells have recently been discovered in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

JI has been able to replace its top-level leaders from within its own ranks. Its central command structure is still intact;<sup>94</sup> this includes the key technical specialists and bomb-makers. JI's infrastructure remains in place<sup>95</sup> and increasingly JI members recruited and trained outside Afghanistan are active in terrorist operations.

JI's external and domestic operational environments have altered radically over the last half- decade. While the Palestine issue is far from settled, for the moment television images are dominated by the peace process and Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon not Israeli military operations and suicide bombers. The images of war in Afghanistan have given way to the electoral process and national reconstruction. Television coverage of Iraq is now dominated by carnage committed by terrorists against fellow Muslims.<sup>96</sup> Domestically, Indonesia has moved from the disintegration of the New Order and sectarian violence that accompanied its demise, to a calmer period where regional ceasefires are holding by and large. Indonesia has peacefully completed a democratic electoral process that revealed little popular support for Muslim militants. The quick response by the United States to the tsunami in late 2004 has resulted in a rise in

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<sup>93</sup>Rekhi, “Terror in South-east Asia.”

<sup>94</sup>Including Abu Dujanah (secretary), Zulkarnaen, Azahari, Noordin Mohammad Top, and Dul Matin.

<sup>95</sup>Laskar Khos, which includes a suicide unit, remains a potent threat.

<sup>96</sup>Andrew Sullivan, “In Iraq, the tide turns against insurgents,” *The Times* reprinted in *The New Straits Times*, April 18, 2005, p. 18.



popular perceptions from a low of fifteen percent at time of the Afghanistan war to nearly fifty percent today. Nonetheless, there are traditional “hot spots” in Indonesia, especially where the Darul Islam movement was active or where sectarian conflict has been particularly rife, that will continue to nurture the social networks that provide a recruitment base for terrorists for a long-time to come.

## Leadership Dynamics in Militant Islamist Organizations in Southeast Asia

Zachary Abuza

Leadership counts for a lot in terrorist and insurgent organizations which, by definition, need to be highly adaptable and protean to survive. Leaders are obviously charismatic, able to recruit members and martyrs; they are often also good managers, adept at running complex and diversified organizations. This paper will analyze leadership dynamics in Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and its affiliated organizations, as well as other militant Islamist organizations in Southeast Asia, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and two Thai organizations. The Gerakan Mujiheddin Islamiyah Pattani (GMIP) and the Barisan Revolusi Nasional Coordinate (BRN-C).

The terrorism field is divided between analysts who believe that terrorists have demonstrable psychological traits (Jerald Post, Ariel Merari) and those who argue that terrorists are not psychopaths or have identifiable traits; but are the product of small group dynamics (Marc Sageman).<sup>97</sup> I come down firmly on the side of Sageman and proponents of a sociological approach. Terrorist leaders are narcissistic and charismatic, but they engage in cost benefit analysis and asymmetrical warfare as an act of discretion based on rational calculation.

### 1. General Characteristics

There are a few general characteristics that are applicable across the board. First, in all of these organizations, the best leaders have an equal mix of technical skills and religious credentials. As one intelligence analyst once commented to me regarding Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, “He had street credibility because of his operational expertise, but we were surprised that it was the religious leaders who were the most respected amongst captured members.” Religiosity counts for a lot; the ability to issue *fatwahs* and theological justifications is critical.

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<sup>97</sup> Rex Hudson, *The Psychology and Sociology of Terrorism* (Library of Congress Federal Research Division, 2000). Available online at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Sociology-Psychology%20of%20Terrorism.htm>

Being a warrior or an operative is often not enough; the most respected leaders need some religious credentials. Many of the most wanted, or currently arrested members and leaders of the BRN-C, are ustadz from Thamiwittiya foundation madrassas. Many of the MILF field commanders in the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Force are ustadz, including the commanders of the most hardline units most affiliated with JI and the ASG: Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato and Ustadz Wahid Khalil Tondok. The second in command of the MILF, Vice Chairman for Military Affairs, Abdulaziz Mimbintas is an *aleem*. MILF leaders have told me that religious knowledge and piousness are an important qualification for advancement in the organization. Though much has been made of the fact that Chairman el Haj Murad is himself not an ustadz, as Salamat Hashim was, MILF members go out of their way to attack any inference that he is unschooled in religion: “His father was an Ustadz,” one member of the MILF explained to me. “You cannot grow up in a madrassa without knowing the Koran.”<sup>98</sup>

The writings and statements of jailed JI members—including the three volumes written by Mukhlas while in jail—also display a good deal of religious training. Indeed, an American expert on Indonesian Islam, Mark Woodward, who has reviewed the manuscripts in detail, found Mukhlas’ writings to be “surprisingly sophisticated” and displayed a nuanced understanding of the Koran.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, the writings put the movement ideologically in the historical trajectory linking Darul Islam to Al Qaeda. It is likely that JI leaders must be able to defend the religious precepts underlying their justification for violence, in order to convince recruits to subordinate their own judgment to that of a charismatic and omnipotent leadership, as generally occurs within terrorist organizations.<sup>100</sup>

In JI, for example, there has always been an emphasis on the position of the *amir*-or spiritual leader. When Abdullah Sungkar died, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir immediately took over, and when he was arrested, Abu Rusdan was elected.<sup>101</sup> One of the big unknowns now is who the current *amir* is; the best guess is that the position is vacant. Ba'asyir is seen as the “Amir Emeritus,” taking hits for the team, while his two sons are seen as

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<sup>98</sup> Interview with a member of the MILF-CCCH-Secretariat, Cotabato, 27 June 2004.

<sup>99</sup> Personal correspondence.

<sup>100</sup> Rex Hudson, *The Psychology and Sociology of Terrorism* (Library of Congress Federal Research Division, 2000). Available online at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Sociology-Psychology%20of%20Terrorism.htm>

<sup>101</sup> See the indictment against Abu Rusdan.

being groomed for greater things. Individuals such as Mukhlas, were not only operational leaders but religious leaders and masters of JI-run madrassas. Another telling example of this is the case of the JI cell in Pakistan. In the fall of 2003, Pakistani officials arrested a 13-member cell of JI members, known as Al Ghuraba, who were studying in a *madrassa* run by the South Asian militant group Lashkar-e-Toiba. Of the 13 members, six are currently in jail in their home countries (Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia) and seven have now been released from Malaysian custody.<sup>102</sup> This group was to be the core of the next generation of JI's leadership and was sent to Pakistan for advanced religious training. Although there is evidence that Hambali called on them to provide operational assistance to JI and Al Qaeda, they were primarily a religious study group.<sup>103</sup> One of the Al Ghuraba members, Abdul Rahim, stated that the group was formed "purely for religious study and discussion. [Other] senior Jemaah Islamiyah members 'saw the urgency of regeneration in the movement' and sent their sons and their students to Pakistan to study to become ulamas."<sup>104</sup>

It is obvious that JI—as much or more than other terrorist organizations—bases its membership on religious conviction. Discussing the Bali bombing, Mukhlas said that the "jihad concept won't be understood if you start from a secular point of view...because jihad is part of an Islamic system, jihad is exquisite."<sup>105</sup> Samudra concurred, justifying jihad by faith alone: "Our acts are based on conviction. Not anything relating to matters of the stomach, nor below the stomach, let alone for economic matters. None. It is purely for our beliefs."<sup>106</sup>

It is interesting to note that JI has used religious study as a necessary element in training a new generation of leaders. The *Pedoman Umam Perjuangan Al-Jemaah Al-Islamiyah (the General Guidebook for the Struggle of Jemaah Islamiyah, or PUPJI)*

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<sup>102</sup> Almost all of the 13 have family ties to JI: the two Singaporeans are sons of JI and MILF, and the fathers of three of the five detained Malaysian students are JI members. Ellen Nakashima, "Indonesian Militants 'Keep Regenerating,'" *Washington Post*, March 25, 2004. For more on the release of five Malaysian students, see Nelson Benjamin, "Six held Under ISA Freed After Two-Year detention," *The Star*, 22 March 2005.

<sup>103</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, "Singapore Government Press Statement on the Detention of 2 Singaporean Members of the Jemaah Islamiyah Karachi Cell," December 18, 2003.

<sup>104</sup> Ellen Nakashima, "Indonesian Militants 'Keep Regenerating,'" *Washington Post*, 25 March 2004.

<sup>105</sup> BBC Transcripts, Tape 1, 2-3.

<sup>106</sup> BBC Transcripts, Tape 2, 12.

outlines much of JI's philosophy, structure, and modus operandi. Written by two of the organization's most militant clerics, Ali Ghufron (Mukhlas) and Abu Rusdan, the PUPJI is a far more overtly religious document than known Al Qaeda training manuals.<sup>107</sup> It is not necessarily a practical guide on conducting terrorist operations, but a document steeped in Islamic principles and teachings.<sup>108</sup> It makes clear that the cornerstone of JI's ideology is, first and foremost, the understanding and practice of a fundamentalist form of Islam, containing almost nothing about violent jihad.<sup>109</sup>

Related to religiosity of the leadership, is a sense that this is a defensive jihad. The leaders of all of these various organizations are adept in creating the sense that their religion, itself, is under attack, and reinforcing the notion of the religious obligation (*fard ayn*) to wage a defensive jihad. As Imam Samudra said, "It's mandatory for Moslems to defend oppressed fellow Moslems. It's a duty. Perhaps it's more concretely explained in jihad laws. So in the context of the Bali Bombing it is a defense for Moslems." Likewise in the *Ber Jihad Di Patani (Fighting for Patani State)*, the author writes, "It is clarified that fighting to protect various rights is a responsibility that every one must fulfill." (14)

The common denominator between the theoretical antecedents of Al Qaeda seen in the writings of Ibn Taymiyya, Mawlana Abu ala Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammed

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<sup>107</sup> Al Qaeda's manuals can be found at <www.fbi.gov>.

<sup>108</sup> The PUPJI does, however, talk about how operations should be conducted in the *General Manual for Operations*. It emphasizes, planning, and that "the operation should be planned and carried out according to plan." It also outlines a schema for guerilla war, calling for four-stages in an operations: 1) planning, 2) execution, 3) reporting, 4) evaluation. Emphasis is placed on education, meticulous planning, and learning from past acts (including mistakes). Later the document discusses how members should focus on intelligence operations, strength building operations, strength utilization operations, and fighting operations. Almost all emphasis is placed on strength building operations, which is defined as a lengthy process that includes spiritual and physical strengthening. The goals of this educational period, include enlightenment, discipline, instilling a sense of loyalty, physical readiness, and skills to use weapons, tactical and strategic thinking, and leadership development.

<sup>109</sup> JI requires its membership to be steeped in religious training and to be highly devout individuals. The PUPJI is broken down into four main sections: Preamble, the General Manual for Operations, the *Nidhom Asasi*, which outlines the organization's hierarchy, rules and procedures, and a section on explanations and clarifications. The document begins by outlining the ten core principles of the organization: 1) Our aim is only to seek Allah's blessings by means which had been determined by Allah and his apostle; 2) Our belief is the belief of a *Sunnah Wal Jama'ah 'Ala Minjis Salsfish Shalih* Specialist; 3) Our understanding about Islam is *Sumul* following the under-standing of *As-Salifish Shalih*; 4) The goal of our struggle is for men to serve only God by re-erecting *Khalifah* on earth; 5) Our road is creed, *Hijrah* and *Jihad Fie Sabilillah*; 6) Our provisions are knowledge and piety, conviction and trust in Allah, gratitude and patience, simple life and preference for a life hereafter, love for *Jihad Fie Sabilillah* and a *Syahid* [martyr's] death; 7) Our *Wala* to Allah and his Apostle and faithful people; 8) Our enemy is the Devil's evil spirit and human devils; 9) The ties of our *jama'ah* based upon the similarity of goals, faith and understanding of *Ad-Dien*; 10) Our Islam charity is in a pure way and *Kaffah* with the *Jama'ah* system then the *Daulah* and then the *Khalifah*.

Qutb and Abdullah Azzam is the protection of Muslim lands and the protection of Islam itself which is in need of defense against the corrupting influence of secularism and western consumerism. In Southeast Asia, these two themes are most clearly identified through: first, a driving emphasis on the threat of national disintegration, especially following East Timor's independence, and the reclamation of Muslim lands, usurped by Christians, Hindus and Buddhists; and second, by emphasizing the purity of Islamic Faith (i.e. anti-Western and anti-globalization).

The third important characteristic found across the groups is the common reference point of Afghanistan. Although the number of Southeast Asians who went to Afghanistan was quite small, between 600 and 1,000, it was the formative experience of their lives. The Afghan experience, in many ways, compensated for a lack of advanced religious training. People like Hambali, who had secondary-school religious education, could still be in leadership positions because of his Afghan experience. The founders or current leaders of the JI, MILF, Laskar Jihad, Laskar Jundullah, Laskar Khos, ASG, GMIP, all share experience in Afghanistan. Even those who did not fight the Soviets, but simply trained in Al Qaeda, such as Zulkarnaen and Dr. Azahari Husin, have been able to translate that technical expertise and cache of being Al Qaeda trained into leadership positions. Clearly the Afghan experience will be less important and a rare commodity as the next generation takes over.

## **2. Jemaah Islamiyah**

JI has been significantly degraded in terms of its capability and manpower since October 2001. There have been more than 300 arrests, including most of its senior leaders and founding members. JI's leadership structure, its *shura* and regional (*mantiqi*) structure no longer seem to be in place. What is left is a looser organization, autonomous cells, with little if any centralized command and control. Leadership will have important implication in the group's survival. As the former head of Mantiqi 3, Nassir bin Abbas, who is now cooperating with the Indonesian authorities recently said, "JI is in ruins now. Anybody who was a JI member is no longer claiming to be a JI member now. Azahari and Noordin are the most dangerous, but even they don't say they are part of JI now. There is no management, no administration anymore."

While there is no doubt that JI is a looser horizontal organization, comprised of autonomous cells, with its hierarchical and regional structures decimated, it is overstating

the case terribly. While Nassir bin Abas's statement that "anybody who was a JI member is no longer claiming to be a JI member now," is true, it's a semantic issue. Islamist organizations constantly change their names and reform. Downplaying JI's membership is a matter of sheer survival. They understand the disarray it causes law enforcement. Does it really matter if someone is part of JI or that they are a member of Abu Jibril's new organization that is committed to the same end through the same violent means? Indeed this, in a way, is more troubling, as the model that the intelligence community sees as being the future of terrorist organizations is the Madrid 3/11 cell, simply inspired by Al Qaeda's line.<sup>110</sup>

Despite all the arrests, the vast majority have been of low level officials. There is still a group of 20 known JI members now in senior positions, 21 if we include Abu Jibril back on the list. This is not an insignificant number. They are hardened jihadists, determined and charismatic. JI's remaining leaders are not going to quit, god is on their side. To that end, there are several aspects regarding the current leadership that are worth noting.

First, leadership is religiously derived. Of the current 21 known leaders of JI, 17 only have madrassa/Koranic education (Zulkanaen, Dulmatin, Umar Patek, Abu Dujana, Zulkipli Bin Abdul Hir, Aris Munandar, Osman, Nasaruddin Abdul Jalil, Yassin Syawal, Abdul Fatah, Abdul Fatih, Julkipli Salim Salamuddin. Abdurrahman Ayob. Abdulrahim Ayob, Abu Rusdi and Sheikh Abu Hurayrah). Three have secular educations (Zulkifli Marzuki, Dr. Azahari Husin, and Parlindigan Siregar), and one has a mixed-Koranic-secular education (Noordin Mohammad Top). Yet, JI does recruit from across the socio-economic spectrum.

Second, with arrests of much of the group's leadership and the subsequent breakdown in its shura and mantiqi structure, JI is a much looser organization, with more autonomous and dispersed cells. There is no indication that this has fundamentally set the organization back. They seem to have adapted to the new security situation. While we know little about JI's willingness to employ an organizational structure based on leaderless networks or cyber organization, it is clear that the group is more horizontal and less vertical. As Imam Samudra commented after his arrest:

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<sup>110</sup> See National Intelligence Council, Mapping the Global Future (Pittsburgh: Government Printing Office, 2005), 93-94.

In Islam, as we perform our alms, there is no terminology for superiors or subordinates. There isn't. Except for organizations that are really structured, or regular . . . no, there's no structure to it [JI]. No structure. I know there are attempts to describe our organization as a structured one. I understand that. The truth is, there is no structure. Of course it works, why wouldn't it? Allah wills it to work that way, so it works. In fact, such organizations are better, the ones like that, not rigid, very flexible. That's the truth. We have meetings, talked a bit, and there's a plan.<sup>111</sup>

Third, a number of JI's past and present leaders come from the educational sector, either madrassa (Muchlas) or university (Dr. Azahari, Wan Min Wan Mat). There is clearly a desire to transmit values and knowledge. We can see this in another way: Dr. Azahari's cookbooks are fundamentally different than those of Ramzi Yousef, intended for the broadest dissemination of knowledge.

Fourth, JI's leaders, in particular Noordin Muhammad Top and Zulkarnaen, are highly charismatic and have been able to successfully recruit people for three separate suicide bombings, something that just did not seem possible in Southeast Asia a few years ago. Interrogations in Malaysia revealed that Hambali had recruited some six individuals for martyrdom missions. Other detained JI members have admitted that they were recruited to engage in suicide operations. Sidney Jones has written that Zulkarnaen established a suicide wing of the organization, the Laskar Khos with approximately 15 members.

Fifth, JI leaders have proven not only able to change their leadership structure to adapt to counter-terror operations, they have shown some ability to learn. This should not be surprising. It is a small organization fighting an asymmetrical war. In the PUPJI, a section details the four-stages of operations: 1) planning, 2) execution, 3) reporting, and 4) evaluation. Emphasis is placed on education, meticulous planning, and learning from past acts (including mistakes). For example, over the years JI has evolved by adopting the tactics of other transnational terrorist organizations, particularly in the use of suicide bombers. But we can also see this in the composition of bombs. For example, when there was a popular backlash after the fact that 14 of the 15 victims of the JW Marriott bombing were Indonesian, the bomb employed in the Australian Embassy attack in September 2004, had no fuel as accelerant; the most readily available component. They

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<sup>111</sup> BBC Transcripts, Tape 2, 12.



tend to be attuned to the world around them.

Sixth, JI members have a very long timeframe. No jihadi that I have ever interviewed, including Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, believed they would accomplish their goal in their lifetime. Their only obligation is to "move the ball as far down the field" as they can during their time on earth. The PUPJI, after all, provides a 30-year time-frame for jihad, and outlines a schema for guerrilla war: "View, analyze and explore all aspects of life in the enemy's body and in the environment...View carefully and honestly all our potential strengths and effective powers we possess... Determine points of target and the environment to be handled in relation with our goals." And of course in Jihadist practice, strategic retreats are ordained: the Prophet himself had to retreat from Mecca to Medina.

Finally while there is a debate amongst academics whether JI has factionalized into two competing camps, one comprised of neo-Darul Islamists who support sectarian conflict, versus the international jihadists who want to target Western interests and be linked up into the global jihadist network, it over emphasizes the rifts within the organization. The debate within the organization is real. However, sectarian conflict and international jihadism are not mutually exclusive, they are mutually supportive. One cannot forget that the leader of the "internationalist" faction, Hambali, through everything he had into fomenting sectarian violence in the Maluku and Sulawesi in 1998-2001. This created the Manichean world view and gave a new pool of recruits in the two paramilitaries, Laskar Mujiheddin and Laskar Jundullah, the sense of defending their religion.

It is clear that when we analyze how JI's leaders seek to reconstitute the organization, it will once again be through the path of provoking sectarian conflict. This is what JI and its leaders were consumed with in 1998-2000. In 2004, there were a number of bombings, attacks, and assassinations in which JI/LJ/LM members were implicated, that must be seen as an attempt to break the uneasy truce that has held since the negotiation of the Malino Accords in 2002. In March 2005, Indonesian police raided an Islamist militant's safehouse and seized a cache of 95 IEDs and ammunition; they are bracing for a new wave of sectarian conflicts. To that end, there are also attempts to provoke sectarian strife in Mindanao. One Philippine Intelligence official confirmed to me that several members of the Laskar Jundullah were currently in Mindanao. He went

out of his way to differentiate them from common JI members.<sup>112</sup> Other JI members, such as Zulkifli, encouraged their MILF<sup>113</sup> and ASG contacts to escalate attacks on Christians. Abu Solaiman, one of Khadaffy Janjalani's lieutenants has openly called for greater a jihad against the Christians; and we should not be surprised by this. As the ASG has transformed itself anew, from a criminal group to a terrorist organization, they are reverting back to their traditional MO. One must not forget that from 1991-1995, their terrorist attacks, assassinations and kidnappings were almost without exception against Christian targets. And there is some alarm that the conflict in Southern Thailand is spiraling out of control and that JI will try to take advantage of it, as they did in the Maluku and Sulawesi in 1998. While there is no evidence to support that JI is behind the violence in southern Thailand, there are limited links between JI and two of the groups that has been one of the main perpetrators of the violence. More than 600 people perished in southern Thailand since the fighting resumed in January 2004.

### **3. The Laskar Mujiheddin**

There are a number of organizations that are co-tangled with JI, but which offer insight to how JI leaders have been able to organize, develop their organization and demonstrate their desire to find political space. A clear example of this is the case of Abu Jibril and his reconstituted Laskar Mujiheddin, as well as his new organization.

The Laskar Mujihidin is inextricably linked to JI and Al Qaeda. Founded in January 2000, by Jibril and JI's operational chief Hambali, both of whom have Afghan experience, the organization fielded roughly 500 armed combatants. They were armed by JI operatives in the southern Philippines, and were equipped with high speed motor boats. Laskar Mujihidin operatives worked closely with Al Qaeda operatives, such as Rashid, Omar al-Faruq and the jihadist filmmaker Reda Seyam. Omar al-Faruq married the daughter of Abu Jibril's top lieutenant Fadillah Haris, who was killed in October 2001.

Malaysian authorities detained Jibril on 30 June 2001 and deported him to Indonesia in the summer of 2004, where he was detained on immigration offenses but

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with a NICA Officer, Cotabato, 7 March 2005.

<sup>113</sup> The MILF has traditionally shied away from engaging in sectarian conflict, in the course of their revolution, radical elements of the group have lost patience with the peace process and seem to be willing to ratchet up the violence. Interestingly, the MILF posted a warning about the spectre of sectarian violence on their website. <https://www.luwaran.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=341>

quietly acquitted and released in October 2004. Indonesian authorities asserted that they did not have enough evidence to link Jibril to any terrorist attacks, and downplayed his involvement with Laskar Mujahidin, which he headed, and his role as the number two official in JI, described as the organization's "top recruiter."<sup>114</sup> Indeed, in one recruiting film produced by the Indonesian Mujahideen Council (MMI), he can be seen calling on his congregants to wage a militant jihad. Armed with a pistol extended into the air he exclaimed, "You can't just have the Koran, without the steel. You will bring down the steel." Jibril was designated by the US Treasury as a specially Designated Global Terrorist.<sup>115</sup> He was released after serving five and a half months in Indonesian prison for immigration violations.

Since 2001, with Jibril's arrest and the crackdown against JI members, the Laskar Mujahidin (and its fraternal organization the Laskar Jundullah) has gone completely underground.<sup>116</sup> While the author has seen young members wearing clothing emblazoned with the group's name and logo demonstrate in front of the courthouse where Ba'asyir was on trial, it has been quiescent as an organization. Though it was thought to be behind some of the sporadic violence in the Maluku that resumed in 2004, most Indonesian police and intelligence officials whom I interviewed assumed that the group had disbanded.

Yet not only did they come out of the woodwork, the Laskar Mujahidin dispatched some 250 personnel to Aceh, over 50 of whom were ferried to Aceh aboard Indonesian military planes.<sup>117</sup> They established four base camps in the province including one outside of the airport, adjacent to the camps of other domestic and international relief organizations, beneath a sign that reads, "Islamic Law Enforcement." Unlike the MMI, which is more concerned with providing "spiritual guidance" and restoring "infrastructure in places of religious duties," the Laskar Mujahidin has been involved in relief work, including the distribution of aid and the burial of corpses.<sup>118</sup> Though the

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<sup>114</sup> "Radical Cleric Abu Jibril Finally Free," Laksamana.net, 27 October 2004.

<sup>115</sup> <http://usinfo.org/wf-archive/2003/030124/epf505.htm>

<sup>116</sup> The suspected head of the Laskar Jundullah, Yasin Syawal, the son-in-law of JI founder Abdullah Sungkar, is one of the top JI leaders at large and wanted by Indonesian authorities.

<sup>117</sup> Chris Brummitt, "Extremist Group Sets Up Relief Camp in Indonesia," Associated Press (AP), 7 January 2004.

<sup>118</sup> "Baasyir's Mujahidin Bound for Aceh," Laksamana.Net, 4 January 2004.

organization is vehemently anti-American, it has given cautious backing to the presence of US and Australian troops: “As long as they are here to help, we will have no problem with them. There is no need for any friction.”<sup>119</sup> While there is no evidence that Abu Jibril has been leading the efforts of the MMI and the Laskar Mujihidin in Aceh, it should be expected that he is looking for ways to revitalize and promote these two organizations.

JI understands how to effectively use charities, such as KOMPAK and MERC, to win popular support to work their way into the communities. It is an effective strategy that gets them into the grass roots, provides financial resources and accords them political space.

#### **4. Abu Sayyaf**

In March and April 2003, members of the ASG were implicated along with JI and MILF members in the bombing of the Davao airport and Sasa Wharf that together killed 48 and wounded 204.<sup>120</sup> Since then, the ASG has emerged as the most potent terrorist force in the Philippines, executing or attempting a number of terrorist attacks including the bombing of the Super Ferry that killed more than 190 people.<sup>121</sup> In December 2004, they bombed a market in General Santos, killing 14 and wounding 70. December 2004 to January 2005 saw three aborted bombings. Then on 14 February 2005, they executed three near simultaneous bombings in three separate cities, killing 11, and wounding roughly 136. Following a prison uprising on 14 March 2005, in which 24 ASG members including three detained leaders were killed, the ASG spokesman vowed to take the war “right to your doorsteps” in Manila.<sup>122</sup> At the same time, almost all kidnapping incidents

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<sup>119</sup> “Vulnerable Indonesia Warned of Terror Threat,” AP, 7 January 2004.

<sup>120</sup> The special panel created by the government, the Maniwang Commission, cleared senior MILF leaders of the bombings at the Davao International Airport and Sasa Wharf. The Maniwang Commission issued its findings on 25 March 2004. Government officials have linked several JI members who were trainers at MILF camps and now held in custody in Malaysia to the bombings. “Prosecutor to MILF on Davao Bombings: Face Trial,” MindaNews, 1 June 2004.

<sup>121</sup> Jainal Antel Sali, aka Abu Sulaiman, first claimed responsibility for the SuperFerry 14 bombing, though it was perpetrated by Redondo Cain Dellosa, aka Arnulfo Alvarado.

<sup>122</sup> The three leaders were Nadzmie Sadual (aka Commander Global), Alhamser Manatad Limbong (aka Commander Kosovo) and Ghalib Andang (aka Commander Robot). The standoff took place at Camp Bagong Diwa Prison after the ASG members had weapons smuggled in. Three guards were killed. “Abu

by the ASG have ceased. From October 2004, there were five separate kidnapping incidents by ASG operatives, but all of those ended in executions, not demands for ransom.<sup>123</sup> The trend now seems to be to kill all suspected intelligence operatives or informers.

Why is the ASG getting back into the terrorism business? Why is it giving up its lucrative kidnap for ransom business? There are two important endogenous explanations: changes within the ASG and their leadership, a shift in their relationship with the MILF, and since 2002, an active attempt by JI to recruit and enlist them.

Following the death of the ASG's founder Abdurajak Janjalani in 1998, the ASG split up into three distinct factions that became nothing more than extraordinarily violent kidnapers. Much of this, according to Philippine intelligence officials, was driven by Aldam Tilao (Abu Subaya) and Ghalib Andang who had a "domineering personality" and was driven solely by greed.<sup>124</sup> Often the only way that organizations can change policy is by changing their leaders. In the case of the ASG, leadership transition was involuntary. Abu Subaya was killed in a joint US-Filipino ambush in June 2002, while Ghalib Andang (aka Commander Robot) was captured in December 2003. Authority in the loosely knit group appears to have been consolidated by Khadaffy Janjalani,<sup>125</sup> the younger brother of the founder, who seems more intent on bringing the group back to its religious moorings. His brother Hector Janjalani was previously arrested for plotting terrorist acts in Manila. Khadaffy Janjalani, himself, was trained in Afghanistan. Though implicated in high profile kidnapping incidents, such as the one on Palawan Island on 27 May 2000 that led to the capture of 20 people, and the beheading of an American hostage, PNP debriefs of

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Sayyaf, Very Much Alive, Threaten Retaliation for Bloody Prison Assault," Associated Press (AP), 15 March 2005.

<sup>123</sup> "Reward Offered for Hinolan's Attacker," *The Manila Times* Internet Edition, 16 November 2004; "Suspected Abu Sayyaf Gunmen Abduct Doctor in Sulu," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 November 2004; "Philippine Government official Dies in Suspected Abu Sayyaf Attack," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 12 December 2004; Julie Alipala, "Sayaff Men Abduct, Execute 3 Salesmen from Pampanga," *PDI*, 11 January 2005.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with a Senior NICA official, Quezon City, 28 June 2004.

<sup>125</sup> Khadaffy is roughly 30 years old, the youngest of five children. Khadaffy studied Islamic studies in Marawi City, before traveling to Pakistan and later an Al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan. He is married to Sherma, his first cousin and the daughter of Ustadz Hussein Manatad, one of the religious directors of the Tabuk, Mosque in Isabela, Basilan.

six ASG members who were captured in October 2002, present a very clear picture that Khadaffy Janjalani was primarily focused on waging jihad through an urban bombing campaign. He directed his underlings to reconnoiter targets, acquire bomb-making skills and ingredients, organized training by Middle Eastern operatives, and ordered bombings in Zamboanga, General Santos and elsewhere.<sup>126</sup> He was responsible for the December 2002 bombing in Zamboanga that killed a member of the US Special Forces.

Janjalani is “working very hard to get the ASG back to its roots,” one Philippine intelligence official said to me. But this was more for personal reasons: he was “trying to assert his legitimacy based on the religious authority of his brother.”<sup>127</sup> Janjalani seems truly interested in reasserting the ASG as a legitimate national liberation front organization as he stated in a radio interview;<sup>128</sup> and the ASG has not been implicated in any kidnapping for ransom since the capture of Ghalib Andang. In pursuit of this goal, Khadaffy Janjalani has sought to improve ties with the largest independence movement in the southern Philippines, the MILF.

The ASG is a protean organization. There is little understanding about the leadership structure.<sup>129</sup> Khadaffy Janjalani sits at the top of the organization.<sup>130</sup> Beneath him are several lieutenants who are with him in Mindanao. These include, Isnilon Hapilon, Jainal Antel Sali Jr. (aka Abu Solaiman), Hajijul, and Esmin Radullan. Then there are a handful of other commanders based on Jolo, Basilan and Tawi Tawi. These include, Radullan Sahiron (aka Commander Putol), Gumbahali Abu Jumdail (aka Dr. Abu), Mubin Ibba, Albader Parad, Hadon Adak, Borhan Mundus, Hadji Radi Upao.

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<sup>126</sup> “An Update of the Recent Bombing in Mindanao and Metro Manila,” 25 November 2002.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with a NICA Officer, San Juan, Manila, 1 July 2004.

<sup>128</sup> Simon Elegant, “The Return of the Abu Sayyaf,” *Time-Asian Edition*, 30 August 2004.

<sup>129</sup> According to LtCol. Guerrero, the ASG’s “central committee in Basilan, the highest governing body, is under the supervision of Isnilon Hapilon (aka Tuan Isnilon). It has six functional and one special staff. These are the Personnel and Operations, Urban Demolitionist and Intelligence, Logistics/Supply/Budget, Finance, Liaison, and Medical. Hector Janjalani heads the special staff.” This overstates the group’s organization even in its hay day. See “Philippine Terrorism and Insurgency: What to Do about the Abu Sayyaf,” Master’s Thesis, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2002.

<sup>130</sup> Despite Malacanang’s call for the AFP and intelligence services to draw up a new “order of battle” in October 2004, nothing has been completed or publicly released. Marichu Villanueva and Jaime Laude, “Palace Updates ‘Order of Battle’ Versus Terrorists,” *PS*, 24 October 2004.

<sup>131</sup>Bon

Little is known about their relationship. The archipelagic commanders appear to have little knowledge or role in ASG's terrorist operations. While they are not completely breakaway factions, and there is evidence of limited coordination, Khadaffy Janjalani does not have effective control over them. The ASG changes shape everyday depending on arrests. During 2002-2003, AFP and police arrested 100 suspected ASG members. It is a very fluid organization.

## **5. MILF**

The MILF is a roughly 12,000 man guerilla force that is waging a secessionist struggle to create an Islamic homeland in the southern Philippines. A breakaway faction of the MNLF in 1978, it rejected the secular Moro National Liberation Front's (MNLF) peace agreement with the Philippine Government in 1996, though it is currently engaged in a peace process with the government.

The MILF's leadership structure is the most complex of all the groups discussed in this paper. It is lead by a Chairman, currently Ebrahim el Haj "Kagi" Murad. Beneath him is the MILF's Central Committee, which has roughly twenty-four members (it changes over time), though its composition is a secret (I have identified 18-19 current members). The Jihad Executive Committee is authorized to make decisions on behalf of the central Committee in emergencies; it has roughly 4-5 members. Beneath the Central Committee are three vice chairman: Military Affairs (Aleem Abdulaziz Mimbintas), Political Affairs (Ghazali Jafaar) and Internal Affairs (currently vacant). There are currently 6 standing committees of the Central Committee: Information (Mohegar Iqbal), Intelligence (Bon al Hoq), Da'wah (Ibrahim Ali and Sheikh Mohammad Muntasir), Foreign Affairs (Ustadz Abu Zahir), Educations (Tops Ghulani) and Finance ("Edward"). The Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Force, the MILF's armed wing, is led by its General Staff (roughly 15 members). The current chief of staff is Sammy Gambar al Mansour, and his deputy is Tahyah Luksudatu. There are nine separate base commands.

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<sup>131</sup> Rex Hudson, *The Psychology and Sociology of Terrorism* (Library of Congress Federal Research Division, 2000). Available online at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Sociology-Psychology%20of%20Terrorism.htm>

Many of the MILF leaders are Egyptian or Libyan trained. Many studied at Al Azhar. More recently, more members have been trained in Saudi Arabia, which has led to a more radical shift in the group.

The Philippine press is constantly filled with reports of the factionalization of the MILF. The MILF completely denies this, and demands evidence of any challenge to Murad's control. Based on dozens of interviews with MILF officials, their negotiators and advisors, I contend that the MILF is a more unitary organization than they are given credit for, with effective (though it can be slow) command and control. There are clearly differences of opinion over certain policies (Jemaah Islamiya, for example), but there is no overt factionalism that hampers decision-making or threatens the organization as a whole. There are ethno-linguistic divisions, but that does not necessitate challenges to his leadership. That is one reason Salamat Hashim was such a natural leader: he was an Iranao, the small tribe wedged between the majority groups, the Maranaos and Maguindanaon. There is no leader with his own armed faction that can subvert or ignore the decisions of the Central Committee. From his election to the chairmanship in July 2003 through the present, Murad has been in firm control of the organization. As many in the organization have noted to me, there is no one with anything near Murad's stature and popular appeal, who could effectively challenge him.

That said, the potential for factionalism is there, especially over a peace agreement with the government that falls short of full independence or a referendum. Spoilers to the peace process can already be identified. Were fault lines to appear, it is evident where they would come from: the 106<sup>th</sup> and 109<sup>th</sup> base commands, under Salamat Samir and Ustadz Umberil Kato, respectively, that stretch from the Liguasan Marsh through to Datu Saudi Ampatuan and Datu Piang. In the summer of 2004, Murad tried but failed to relieve Salamat Samir of his command of the 106<sup>th</sup> Base command, and bring him into his headquarters as the head of the National Guard Division. Likewise, in January 2005, Ustadz Umberil Kato was moved to the Buliok region. The 106<sup>th</sup> and 109<sup>th</sup> base commands comprise the majority of ceasefire violations. They are also the two most likely to serve as spoilers if the Central Committee signs a peace agreement that they deem to be unacceptable. Their ties to the ASG and JI, are indicative of their more radical bent; and likely lack of support for the peace process.

Murad is still in control, but I would surmise that his position has been weakened by the fact that in a year and a half, he has not succeeded in resuming peace talks, while



key issues are heating up internal debates. Members of the MILF community disagree, and have suggested to me that should talks fail, he will become even more popular in the eyes of the Bangsamoro, a la Yassir Arafat post Wye River.

Rather than factionalism, the real threat seems to be generational. It is not so much that the Central Committee is aging, and there has not been a regular transition of leaders. Indeed, the MILF asserts that they have cultivated a successor generation, and point to the fact that younger members are in deputy positions and comprise “more than half of the members of the present Central Committee.” Of greater concern is the frustration of the youth, in that the older generation has failed to achieve victory. Murad in his August 2004 interview with *Time Magazine*, and other Front members whom I have interviewed have expressed concern about growing radicalism in the ranks. Frustration with the elder generation is high; there is a critical mass of young people trained in the Middle East, who are predisposed to more radical and intolerant interpretations of Islam, who believe they need to ratchet up the violence. They will look to outside leaders and models in pursuit of their agenda.

## **6. Thai organizations: BRN Coordinate and GMIP**

One of the most troubling aspects of the unrest in southern Thailand is that the government apparently has such a poor grasp of who is behind such attacks. As the respected security affairs correspondent Anthony Davis has written, “Two years after the current campaign gathered pace, the authorities appear to have little understanding of its organizational composition, command structure, or the nature and extent of its international connections.”<sup>132</sup> A member of the Royal Family dealing with the south acknowledged to me, “we don’t know who the insurgents are.”<sup>133</sup> Statements range from the Prime Minister’s assertions that they are merely “criminal gangs” to policy makers who assert that “separatists with possible links to foreign Muslim extremists” are to blame.<sup>134</sup> There are at least four organizations that have some role in the violence: the Gerakan Mujiheddin Islamiyah Patani (GMIP), new generation/outgrowth of the old BRN networks (now known as the BRN Coordinate), Jemaah Salafi, and elements of

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<sup>132</sup> Anthony Davis, “Are Thailand’s Southern Militants Moving to Soft Targets?” *Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, 5 April 2004.

<sup>133</sup> Author Interview, Bangkok, 16 March 2005.

<sup>134</sup> General Kittirattachaya, the government’s top security official for southern Thailand, cited in Alan Sipress, “Inspired by Anger a World Away,” *Washington Post*, 15 May 2004.

New Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) (a splinter of the original secessionist organization PULO).

The GMIP was founded first in 1986 by Vae-Hama Vae-Yuso, but broke up by 1993 as a result of internal squabbling.<sup>135</sup> In 1995 Nasori Saeseng (aka Awae Kaelae) and Jaekumae Kutae, two Afghanistan veterans, consolidated power, but for most of the 1990s, the GMIP was more of a criminal gang than freedom fighters and was thought to have run guns for other Muslim insurgent groups, in particular the MILF (Mindanao) and GAM (Aceh). They were engaged in kidnapping and extortion. The GMIP was thought to earn bt10 million a year in contract killings and “enforcement.”<sup>136</sup> As one senior Thai Intelligence official told me, the “Gerakan Mujiheddin had a poor record in the past. It was really a criminal gang. But they purged their leadership.”<sup>137</sup>

The GMIP tried to raise their profile in early 2002 by staging a number of raids on police and army outposts to steal weapons in the three provinces of Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani. Eight police and a teacher were killed in raids in March 2002 alone. In June 2002, a raid on a remote outpost netted 17 assault rifles and 16 shotguns.<sup>138</sup> Ma Daeng, the top aid to the GMIP chief Awae Kaelae, led a raid on an army outpost in Narathiwat in July 2002. In 2002 alone, 21 police officers were killed. In April 2003, GMIP rebels attacked two Marine Corp units, killing five marines and seizing 30 M-16 rifles. Between 2002-2004 the group was responsible for the death of 40 police officers.<sup>139</sup> Raids on armories have been the group’s modus operandi for the past four to five years.

Though the government does not speak of the GMIP regularly, a steady stream of arrest warrants and a handful of arrest of GMIP leaders, suggest that this is one of the most important organizations behind the insurgency. In January 2004, the government announced that it was searching for Doromae Kuteh (aka Chae Kumae Kuteh, Jehku Mae Kuteh), the head of the GMIP and “the mastermind of many evil attacks on the south,” while on 28 November Thai authorities announced that they had killed Mukata Puleng, a

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<sup>135</sup> Peter Chalk, “Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 24 (2001): 260.

<sup>136</sup> “Muslim Group Linked to Attacks in Thailand,” *Straits Times*, 25 March 2002.

<sup>137</sup> Author Interview, Bangkok, 16 March 2005.

<sup>138</sup> Arul John, “South Thailand Attacks: Did Raiders Have JI Links?” *New Paper*, 13 January 2004.

<sup>139</sup> Arul John, “South Thailand Attacks: Did Raiders Have JI Links?” *New Paper*, 13 January 2004.

member of the GMIP.<sup>140</sup> On 26 January, Thai authorities announced that the Malaysian government had arrested Doromae Kuteh<sup>141</sup> and that Sapae-ing Basor was negotiating his surrender.<sup>142</sup> Other top insurgents for whom the government has issued arrest warrants include: Mr. Masae Useng, Sapae-ing Basor<sup>143</sup>; Abdullah Munir; Kariya Yalahpae; Heepanee Marea; Ammad Muri Latea; Mamu Borodorya; Ismail Kengmalapi; Sapae Ing, and Ahmad Tue-gneng.<sup>144</sup>

The Thai National Security Council acknowledged that there is “a new Islamic grouping” which, “through increasing contacts with extremists and fundamentalists in Middle Eastern countries, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, they have metamorphosed into a political entity of significance [sic].”<sup>145</sup> At the same time, Thai intelligence now speaks of the insurgency as being a “pondok-based” movement.<sup>146</sup> As General Pisarn Wattanawongkeeree, the commander of Thai forces in the south said, “There is no doubt that the basis for this new insurgency are the *ustaz*. This is something that has been in the making for a long time.”<sup>147</sup> A police official stated “We suspect some [Islamic] schools might have played a significant role in these shootouts. We think that they might have been used as training grounds for militants, or teachers might have indoctrinated their pupils with fundamentalist ideologies.”<sup>148</sup> By October, even the Prime

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<sup>140</sup> Mukata, 28, was a resident of Narathiwat and a lieutenant of GMIP chief, Awae Kaleh. Police found seven assault rifles, ammunition, three incendiary devices and two hand grenades in his vehicle. A warrant for his arrest and a Bt500,000 bounty had been offered for information leading to his capture. “Suspected Insurgent Shot Dead,” *The Nation*, 29 November 2004.

<sup>141</sup> The bilateral debate over his extradition will be discussed in the section on Malaysian-Thai relations.

<sup>142</sup> “Top Insurgent Leader Arrested in Malaysia, Says PM,” TNA, 26 January 2005; “Rebel ‘Mastermind’ Held,” *The Star*, 27 January 2005.

<sup>143</sup> Basor’s name was highly sensitive as he had close ties with a group of Thai Muslim legislators, known as the “Wadah Faction.” See, “PM Says Alleged Insurgent Leader Not Linked To Islamic MPs,” TNA, 21 December 2004.

<sup>144</sup> “Police Distribute ‘Wanted’ Posters for Southern Insurgents,” TNA 24 November 2004; “Suspected militants demand to see lawyers,” TNA, 20 December 2004.

<sup>145</sup> Cited in Shawn Crispin, “Strife Down South,” *FEER*, 27 January 2004.

<sup>146</sup> The Thai Ministry of Education has registered 214 Islamic schools, but acknowledges that there are hundreds of small, unregistered, privately-owned *pondoks*. “Muslim Teachers Extend Cautious Welcome to Aree,” *The Nation*, September 2004.

<sup>147</sup> Simon Elegant, “Southern Front,” *Time-Asia*, 11 October 2004.

<sup>148</sup> Nopporn Wang-anan, “Thai Muslim Schools Deny Militant Links,” Reuters, 7 May 2004.

Minister was forced to concede that it was a student-based movement, supported by radical clerics: “This is a domestic problem with the fashion of [an Islamic] brotherhood. Some religious teachers are recruiting students to stage violence. This has gained momentum since 9/11 [sic]”,<sup>149</sup> Many of the radical clerics are quite young, and recent graduates of Middle Eastern and South Asian madrassas.<sup>150</sup> It is estimated that there are currently 160 Thai Muslims studying in Saudi Arabia, 900 in Sudan, and some 1,500 in Egypt.<sup>151</sup>

The evidence suggest that these schools, ustadz and radical students hail from the old Barisan Revolusi Nasional organization and networks established in the 1970s. At the time, the BRN was a divided organization: some members were distinctly Islamist and opposed the nationalist agenda of PULO. At the same time, it was founded, in part, as a result of popular unrest over an attempt by Prime Minister Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat to place all *pondoks*<sup>152</sup> under the purview of the Ministry of Education. But what was interesting about this Islamist organization was that it maintained working ties with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM); the BRN supported the establishment of a pan-Malay state that would be leftist (anti-capitalist) in orientation.

But the old BRN network (I use network intentionally because there are many outgrowths of the original BRN organization), developed and became far more religiously oriented. Thai intelligence officials note that the BRN network has traditionally changed its leadership often, which has allowed the organization to change its ideological orientation.<sup>153</sup>

The BRN Coordinate, the umbrella grouping for the various BRN splinters, is a more urban based organization, unlike the GMIP. It is also based in the pondoks and Islamic schools. Its current leaders for the most part are school teachers and ustadzs. Urban youth are their main recruitment pool. There is no real estimate of the number of

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<sup>149</sup> Cited in Simon Elegant, “Southern Front,” *Time-Asia*, 11 October 2004.

<sup>150</sup> Thai officials estimate that some 200 attended South Asian Madrassas in the past decade, though it is unknown how many went to Afghanistan.

<sup>151</sup> John R. Bradley, “Waking Up to the Terror Threat,” *The Straits Times*, 27 May 2004.

<sup>152</sup> Islamic schools, or *madrassas*.

<sup>153</sup> Author Interview, Bangkok , 17 March 2005.

members in the BRN Coordinate, but Thai officials estimate that there are approximately 1,000.<sup>154</sup>

Thai security officials suggest that the preachers and teachers from 18 schools are the central figures in the BRN Coordinate and that they tried to establish a network throughout 300 schools.<sup>155</sup> For example, Yusuf Rayalong (aka Ustadz Ismae-ae) actively recruited from his student body, and some twenty people arrested, killed or wanted in connection with the April attacks hail from his school.<sup>156</sup> Twelve others (eight students, three alumni and a former teacher) hail from another school, which has Egyptian funding.<sup>157</sup>

On 14 December 2004, members of the Ministry of Justice's Special Investigations Department launched a raid on five different madrassas and arrested four Islamic teachers from the Thammawittaya Foundation School<sup>158</sup>: Yusof Waeduramae,<sup>159</sup> Muhamad Hanafi Doleh, Ahama Buleh and Abdul Roseh Hayidoloh.<sup>160</sup> A fifth, Sapa-ing Basoe, 68, the principal of the school, was described as the political leader of the BRN Coordinate, escaped.<sup>161</sup> In January 2005, another teacher from the Thammawittaya

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<sup>154</sup> Author Interview, Bangkok, 16 March 2005.

<sup>155</sup> "Fugitive Headmaster May Be Top Insurgent," *The Nation*, 17 December 2004.

<sup>156</sup> "Suspect Sought Over Thai Attacks," BBC, 5 May 2004.

<sup>157</sup> Nopporn Wang-anan, "Thai Muslim Schools Deny Militant Links," Reuters, 7 May 2004.

<sup>158</sup> The school, which is one of the largest Islamic schools in Thailand, was founded in 1951 by Haji Muhamad Tohe Sulong, and has some 6,000 students, spread across four separate campuses. It has 196 *ustadz*, or Islamic teachers. The curriculum is mixed, however, and only 400 students solely study Islam. For more on the school see, "Top Islamic School Denies That It Is a Breeding Ground for Extremists," *The Nation*, 18 December 2004.

<sup>159</sup> According to Sirichai Thanyasiri, the director of the Southern Border Provinces Peace-Building Command, Yusuf Waeduramae was believed to be the man who planned the 5 January 2004 raid on the army camp which netted over 300 firearms. "Breakthrough in the South: Hunting Down the Masterminds," *The Nation*, 17 December 2004. The Director-General of the Special Investigations Department, Sombat Amornwiwat, stated that documents found in his house strongly linked him to the separatists. "Evidence Against 'Masterminds' Behind Insurgent Attacks is Strong, Says SID," *The Nation*, 24 December 2004.

<sup>160</sup> Thai officials believe that Abdul Roseh was the financial chief for the cell, and he solicited and disbursed foreign funds.

<sup>161</sup> The four were arrested after a confession by another of the school's teachers, Usma Malakoe, who had been arrested previously in connection with several armed robberies and violent attacks. Sapa-ing Basoe is

Foundation School, Hama Jehter (aka Sawmad Luepae), was arrested. The 37-year old cleric was identified by other Thammawittaya teachers as the mastermind.<sup>162</sup> Thai police also identified Abdullah Muni as a top leader and Masae Useng, a teacher at the Samphan Wittaya school, as the group's head of military training.<sup>163</sup> Police announced that they had identified 100 additional members.<sup>164</sup>

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the son-in-law of the school's master. Piyanart Srivalo, "PM Buoyed by Arrest of Key Suspects," *The Nation*, 16 December 2004; "Breakthrough in the South: Hunting Down the Masterminds," *The Nation*, 17 December 2004; Amy Kazmin, "Teacher Arrests Sparks Thai Separatist Hunt," *Financial Times*, 17 December 2004; "Fugitive Headmaster May Be Top Insurgent," *The Nation*, 17 December 2004..

<sup>162</sup> "Muslim Religious Teacher, Gunman Arrested," TNA, 15 January 2005.

<sup>163</sup> The school is located in the Joh Airong district of Narathiwat. Papers found in Masae Useng's house suggested that the militants were planning to execute a series of attacks against soft targets, such as tourist venues, in 2005. For more see, "Thailand Alleges Terror Campaign," AP, 23 December 2004; "Reward for the Arrest of Two Islamic Leaders," TNA, 19 December 2004.

<sup>164</sup> Kimina Lyall, "Thailand Links Terror to Neighbors," *The Australian*, 20 December 2004.

# **LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS IN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE ABU SAYYAF CASE\***

**Rommel Banlaoi\*\***

## **Introduction**

Though the Philippine government has described the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) as a spent-force, the ASG continues to be one of the major threats to Philippine internal security. To some extent, the ASG also poses a threat to regional security because of its reported linkages with other terrorist groups operating in Southeast Asia, particularly with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Many scholarly studies have already been written about the ASG.<sup>i</sup> But these studies describe what the ASG has done and can do rather what the ASG, as a terrorist organization, is really all about. While we know a lot about the atrocities committed by the ASG, there is a great deal we do not know about its past as well as present complex organizational structure, current leadership dynamics and recent linkages with new terrorist organizations operating in the Philippines, in particular, and Southeast Asia, in general.

This study attempts, therefore, to describe the complex organization set-up of the ASG, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11, and examine its clandestine leadership dynamics in the light of new developments in the nature of terrorist threats in Southeast Asia. This paper also aims to revisit the discourse on the linkages of ASG with JI and to propel new discussions on the new alliances of ASG with other terrorist groups operating in the Philippines like the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and most recently, the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM). This paper argues that new innovative linkages of ASG with local Muslim radicals and bandits and its continuing creative alliances with terrorist organizations linked to JI have

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unleashed new challenges requiring the adoption of more comprehensive policies and actions to confront the said threats. This study shall be viewed as an initial attempt to describe the evolving threat posed by the ASG and to help inform further debate among scholars and policy-makers working on this subject.

### **Nature and Origin of the Abu Sayyaf Group**

Despite its international notoriety, there is no uniform view of the ASG. The United States has listed the ASG in its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) while the United Nations has designated it as one of the three terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia along with Al Qaeda and the JI.<sup>ii</sup> Some regard the ASG as part of the international fundamentalist movement, linked to Osama bin Laden, which aims to establish an independent Islamic state in the Philippines.<sup>iii</sup> Others see the ASG as the agent provocateur of the Philippine military and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) while the Philippine government continues to condemn the ASG as a mere bandit gang, which aims to amass funds through kidnap-for-ransom, extortion and other criminal activities.<sup>iv</sup> But its members and sympathizers claim that the ASG represents the legitimate desire of all Muslim resistant groups in the Philippines aiming to establish a separate Islamic state

There is also no uniform account of the origin of the ASG. It has a very nebulous beginning.<sup>v</sup> Existing literatures regard Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani as the founder of ASG. But many works have failed to discuss the real intention of Janjalani when he organized the said group. To elaborate his real motive in establishing the ASG amidst various speculations about the nature and objectives of the said organization, Janjalani issued an undated public proclamation, presumably written between 1993 and 1994. In this proclamation, Janjalani aptly stressed what he called the “Four Basic Truths” about the ASG, to wit:

1. It is not to create another faction in the Muslim struggle which is against the teaching of Islam, especially the Quran, but to serve as a bridge and balance between the MILF and MNLF whose revolutionary roles and leadership cannot be ignored or usurped;
2. Its ultimate goal is the establishment of a purely Islamic government whose “nature, meaning, emblem and objective” are basic to peace;



3. Its advocacy of war is necessity for as long as there exist oppression, injustice, capricious ambitions and arbitrary claims imposed on the Muslims; and,
4. It believes that “war disturbs peace only for the attainment of the true and real objective of humanity – the establishment of justice and righteousness for all under the law of the noble Quran and the purified sunnah.”<sup>vi</sup>

Understanding the origin of ASG cannot be completed without a full grasp of Janjalani’s background and the socio-economic-political-cultural context of Muslim radicalism in the Philippines. Though many scholarly works have been published about the origin of Muslim radicalism in the Philippines,<sup>vii</sup> the life and philosophy of Janjalani, however, have not been deeply understood by many scholars and policy-makers. In fact, there is only one scholarly, albeit very brief, work describing the life and political philosophy of Janjalani, which can provide the academic and policy-making community initial insights on the ideological aspect of the ASG.<sup>viii</sup>

According to the various intelligence briefings of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the formation of the ASG could be traced from the disgruntled members of the MNLF over the dormant secessionist movement in the late 1970s.<sup>ix</sup> But the date of ASG’s birth has not been exactly identified because of the lack of a document of its establishment. Even some captured leaders and members of the ASG cannot tell the exact foundation of the organization. Experts and policy makers are not even certain if the ASG referred to a formal organization or just an informal network of like-minded Filipino secessionist leaders and Muslim radicals. What is certain is that Janjalani used the nom de guerre *Abu Sayyaf* while fighting in the 1980s in Afghanistan. Janjalani used this name in creating the ASG in honor of Afghan resistance leader and Islamic professor, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. The Wahabi theology of Professor Sayyaf greatly influenced Janjalani’s concept of an Islamic state. Janjalani formed the movement to propagate his fanatical belief of a Islamic state in the Philippines.

Despite the nebulous origin of the ASG, what is exactly known is that in 1990, Janjalani formed the Mujahideed Commando Freedom Fighters (MCFF) to wage *jihad* against the Philippine government and establish an independent Islamic State in the Philippines. The MCFF was a known forerunner of the ASG. When the MCFF attracted some “hard core” followers in Basilan, Zulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga, it was later called as the ASG. The AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) tagged the ASG

as a terrorist organization when it claimed responsibility for the bombing of M/V Doulos in Zamboanga City in 1991. The M/V Doulos was a Christian missionary ship docked at the Zamboanga port. According to the Southern Command of the AFP, it was in 1991 when the name ASG was first publicly used by Janjalani in connection with the bombing of M/V Doulos.<sup>x</sup> The ASG gained international notoriety on 20 May 1992 when it assassinated Fr. Salvatorre Carzedda, an Italian missionary working in Zamboanga City. These two major events prompted some observers to conclude that the ASG was founded sometime in 1991-1992.<sup>xi</sup>

But a recent study states that the ASG first emerged in 1989.<sup>xii</sup> Based on existing records of the AFP and the PNP, Janjalani renamed the ASG as Al-Harakatul Al-Islamiya (AHAI) in 1994 to receive international funding and support. According to Philippine intelligence reports, the AHAI drew its support from the extremist element in Iran (Hezbollah), Pakistan (Jamaat-Islami and Hizbul-Mujahideen), Afghanistan (Hizb-Islami) Egypt (Al Gamaa-Al-Islamiya), Algeria (Islamic Liberation Front) and Libya (International Harakatul Al-Islamia). The International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) was also known to have provided financial support to AHAI. Because of repeated media reports, the name ASG became more popular than the AHAI. Western sources, however, tend to use and even interchange both names.<sup>xiii</sup>

Though Janjalani was a known *mujahideen* being a veteran of Afghan War, he was not a mere Muslim fighter. He was also a charismatic and serious Muslim scholar, who, ironically, attended high school in Claret College, a Catholic-run school in the Basilan capital of Isabela. But Janjalani received a very good Islamic education in Saudi Arabia in 1981 and was sent to *Ummu I-Qura* in Mecca where he seriously studied Islamic jurisprudence for almost three years.<sup>xiv</sup> He was later attracted deeply to the concept of *jihad* when he conscientiously studied Islamic revolution in Pakistan. Heavily armed with Islamic thoughts, Janjalani went back to his homeland in Basilan in 1984 to preach in various mosques.

While formally establishing the ASG, Janjalani became an avid preacher to limited audiences in Santa Barbara *madrassah* in Zamboanga City in the early 1990s. During his preaching, Janjalani openly released different theological statements and public proclamations revealing his deep grasp of Islamic religion, particularly the Wahabi Islamic theology. Wahabism brands other Muslim sects as heretical. Janjalani delivered at least eight discourses or *Khutbah* within a radical framework based on the Quranic

concept of *Jihad Fi-Sabil-lillah* (the fighting and dying for the cause of Islam).<sup>xv</sup> To advance his fanatical belief, Janjalani convinced some Muslim leaders in Basilan, Sulu, Tawi- Tawi, Zamboanga City and General Santos City to join the *Juma'a Abu Sayyap* movement, now rendered in English as the ASG. Most of his recruits were disgruntled members of the MNLF and the MILF. When Janjalani attended a Islamic course in Tripoli, Libya in 1987, he met like-minded Muslim Filipino students who eventually helped Janjalani to form the ASG. These students had common remorse against the Philippine government based in Manila and against leadership of the MNLF and the MILF. Many scholars and journalists mistranslated ASG to mean "bearer of the sword".<sup>xvi</sup> But ASG really means in Arabic, "Father of the Swordsman".<sup>xvii</sup>

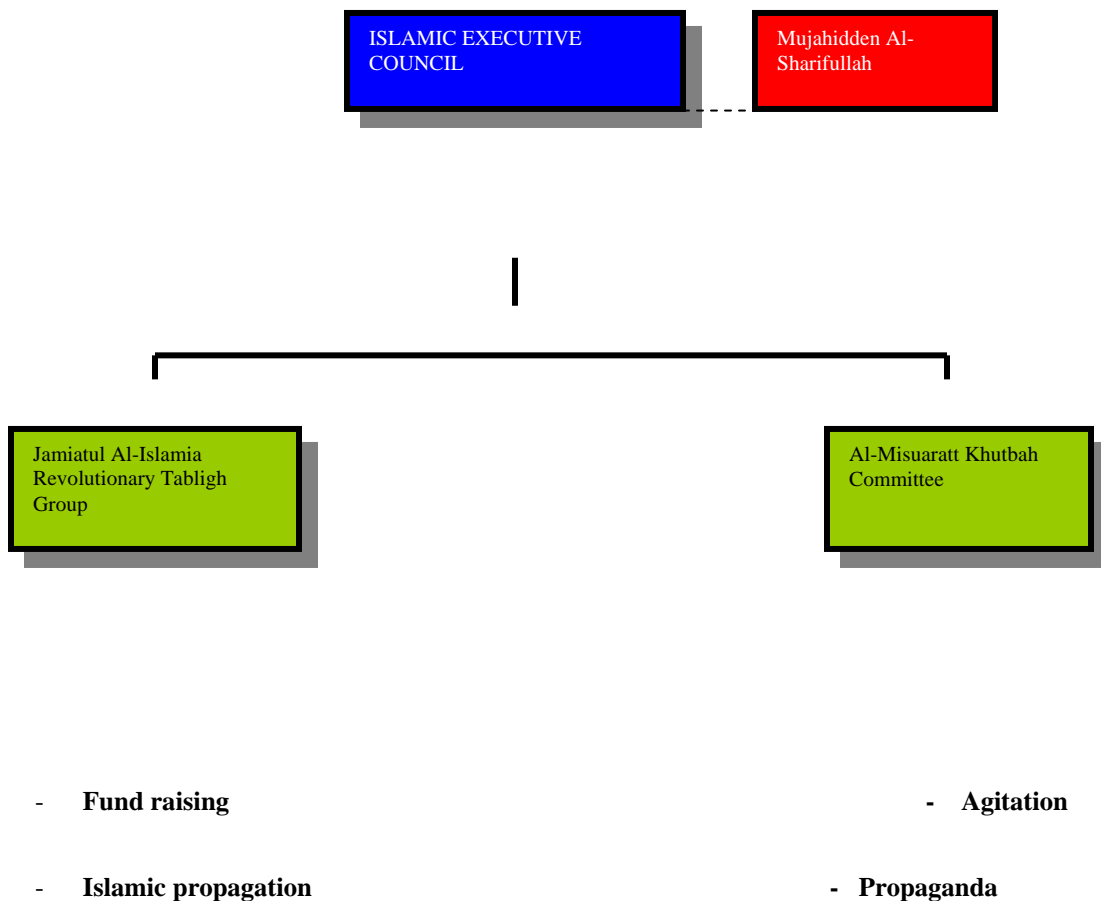
### **The Organization of the ASG**

When Janjalani formed the ASG, his original vision was to form a highly organized, systematic, and disciplined organization of fanatical secessionist Islamic fighters in the Southern Philippines.<sup>xviii</sup> Janjalani recruited younger and more passionate Muslim leaders who studied Islamic theology in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Pakistan and Egypt. These young Muslim leaders had common remorse against the MNLF, which entered into peace agreement with the Philippine government in 1996. These leaders also shared common anger against the Philippine government based in Manila.

To achieve his vision of a truly organized Muslim resistance group in the Philippines, Janjalani deliberately made a detailed organization of the ASG.<sup>xix</sup> He formed the Islamic Executive Council (IEC) composed of fifteen Amirs. Janjalani chaired the IEC to serve as the main planning and execution body of ASG. Under the IEC were two special committees. The first committee was the *Jamiatul Al-Islamia* Revolutionary *Tabligh* Group in charged of fund raising and Islamic education. The second committee was the *Al-Misuaratt Khutbah* Committee in charged of agitation and propaganda activities.<sup>xx</sup>

The ASG also established a military arm called *Mujahidden Al-Sharifullah* whose members came predominantly from disgruntled members of MNLF and the MILF. This military arm had three main units to carryout all terrorist activities of the ASG: the Demolition Team, the Mobile Force Team and the Campaign Propaganda Team. The Demolition Team composed mostly of trained fighters, had the capability to manufacture its own mines and explosives used in the bombing **operations of the group. The Mobile**

Force Team - composed mostly of affiliates of radio clubs, traders, businessmen, shippers, and professionals – was in charged of collaboration and coordination activities of the ASG. The Campaign Propaganda Team – composed of professionals, students, and businessmen – was in charged of gathering vital information necessary to carry out the mission of *Mujahidden Al-Sharifullah*.<sup>xxi</sup>



Source: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3 (2002).

Figure 1. ASG Organization Envisioned by the A. Janjalani

But the original organizational set-up of ASG was short-lived. When the combined forces of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the AFP killed Janjalani in a bloody encounter in December 1998 in Lamitan, Basilan, the ASG suffered a severe leadership vacuum. This led to discontent among some of its original members. The organization set-up by Janjalani crumbled rapidly with him. The IEC headed by Janjalani also suffered an untimely demise. With no overall Amir at the helm of the organization, the group became a mere network of various armed groups with their own respective Amirs commanding their own respective loyal followers operating mainly in Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

With the death of A. Janjalani, remaining leaders, however, reluctantly selected Khadafy Janjalani, a younger brother, as his successor in July 1999. But the ASG under K. Janjalani had lost its original organization set-up and Islamic theological zeal. Unlike the older Janjalani, the younger Janjalani did not have the theological passion of his brother. Lacking strong ideological guide, most of its members resorted to banditry, piracy, kidnap-for-ransom, and other terrorist activities. The ASG was also heavily factionalized. It has been reported recently, however, that K. Janjalani is reviving the Islamist agenda of the ASG.

### **Leadership Dynamics in the ASG**

According to various AFP reports, there were two major factions of the ASG operating independently in two major areas in the Southern Philippines: Basilan and Sulu. Khadafy Janjalani still heads the Basilan-based ASG. Galib Andang, otherwise known as Commander Robot, headed the Sulu-based ASG. But the Sulu group unexpectedly lost its leader with the capture of Commander Robot in December 2003. Commander Robot was eventually killed in a bloody jailbreak attempt on 15 March 2005.

Other AFP reports talked of another faction of ASG operating in Zamboanga City with Hadji Radzpal as the main leader. But Hadji Radzpal was also identified by other intelligence sources as one of the leaders of the Sulu-based faction of the ASG. Local leaders have denied the existence of ASG faction in Zamboanga City.

The Basilan-based ASG was composed of 73 members as of 2002. These members were ASG hard-liners composed of 30 personal followers of Khadafy Janjalani, 30 personal followers of Isnillon Hapilon, and 13 followers of Abu Sabaya. The group of Hapilon was the main security arm of the Basilan-based ASG. The group of Abu Sabaya,

on the other hand, joined the group of Khadafy Janjalani in running the daily planning and administrative affairs of the group. The Philippine military claimed that it killed Sabaya and two others in a naval encounter in June 2002. But Sabaya's body was never found, triggering speculations that he may still be alive despite the AFP's repeated pronouncements that Sabaya was among those who died and drowned in the waters of Sibuco Bay in Zamboanga del Norte.<sup>xxii</sup>

The Sulu-based ASG has become a loose organization of Muslim secessionist fighters loyal to the late Commander Robot. This faction of ASG was responsible for the kidnapping of 21 tourists spending a vacation in a resort in Sipadan Island of Malaysia on 23 April 2000. The Basilan-based and Sulu-based factions of the ASG were also divided into different groups with their own leaders. As of 2002, the Basilan-based faction was composed of ten armed groups while the Sulu-based faction was composed of 16 armed groups.

Table 1 shows the Basilan-based groups of the ASG. Table 2, on the other hand, shows the Sulu-based groups of the ASG.

**Table 1. Basilan-Based Faction of the ASG**

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Known Leaders of the Group</b>
Ampul Group	Mauran Ampu or Abu Mauran
Apting Group	Abu Apting
Danggatil Group	Moto Danggatil or Mata Danggatil
Hapilon Group	Sahiron Hapilon
Isnilon Group	Isnilon Hapilon
Jainuddin Group	Nadjalin Jainuddin
Janjalani Group	Hector Janjalani or Abu Abral
Kaw Jaljalis Group	Kalaw Jaljalis or Boy Granada
Salagin Group	Abu Salagin
Masiraji Sali Group	Hamsiraji Sali

**Source: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3 (2002).**

**Table 2. Sulu-Based Faction of the ASG**

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Known Leaders of the Group</b>
Robot Group	Galib Andang or Cmdr Robot
Amil Group	Julius Aminulla Amil
Asiri Group	Basiri Asiri
Badja Group	Datu Panglima Badja
Bauddin Group	Salapuddin Bauddin
Hayudini Group	Nidzmi Hayudinni or Cmdr Takulong
Hadji Radzpal Group	Hadji Radzpal or Abu Rayhan
Irijani Group	Mudjahid Irijani
Jamal Group	Yahiya Jamal or Abu Alvarez
Kalim Group	Pati Kalim
Landi Group	Kumander Landi
Mali Group	Sulaiman Mali
Saabdula Group	Nadzmi Saabulla or Cmdr Global
Sahiron Group	Radullah Sahiron
Sali Group	Hesseim Sali
Shariff Group	Wahid Shariff

**Source: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3 (undated).**

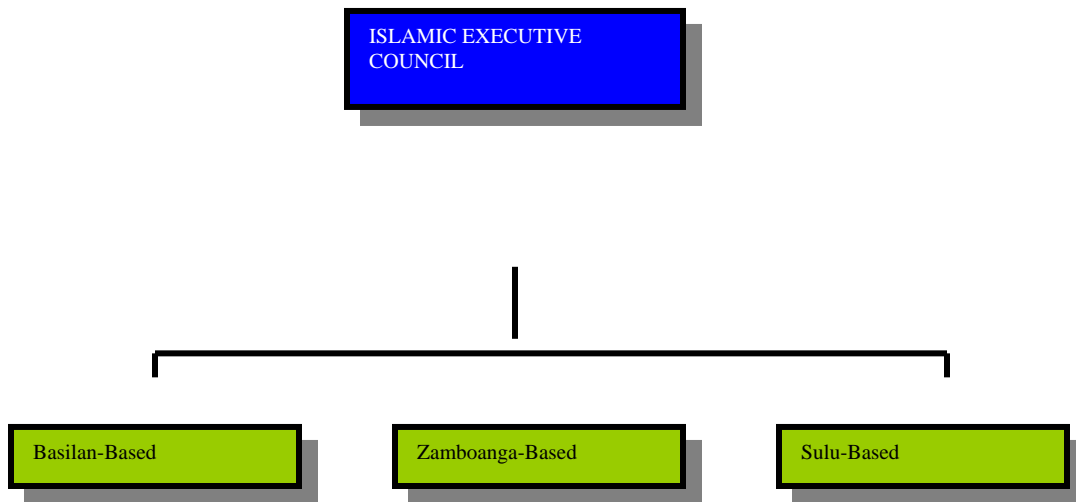
From these groups, it may be observed that the ASG is not a homogenous organization. Rather, the ASG is a very loose coalition of many groups of radical Muslim leaders and bandits commanding their own loyal followers in the Southern Philippines. These groups have mixed objectives from Islamic fundamentalism to mere banditry. Members of these groups pay allegiance mostly to their respective leaders rather than to ASG doctrines. Not all groups are truly committed to the idea of a separate Islamic state in the Southern Philippines, though there is no doubt that some groups are



really committed to the cause. Some Muslim bandit groups in the Southern Philippines want to be associated with the ASG for prestige, political expediency and economic gains. But the dynamics of these groups shares common feature: they are highly personalistic rather than ideological groups of Muslim radicals.

Because of intensified military campaigns of the Philippine government, some groups were dismantled as a result of the capture, neutralization or death of their leaders. But to date, the exact number of surviving groups have not been openly reported by the AFP or the PNP. What is known is that as of 2004, ASG strength was placed at 440, a substantial decrease from its peak of 1,269 in 2000. Based on the official briefing of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force, (ATTF), ASG strength has been reduced to 380 as of the second quarter of 2005. According to the Department of National Defense (DND), “the ASG is presently factionalized and its remnants have splintered and are constantly on the move due to continued military pressures.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

Based on the various factions, the organizational set-up of the ASG was far from those envisioned by Abdurajak Jajalani. Figure 2 was the known organizational structure of the ASG as of 2003. Recent organizational set-up of the ASG has not been publicly released.



Source: Armed Forces of the Philippines, Various documents, 2000-2004.

**Figure 2. ASG Organization After the Death of A. Janjalani**

### **ASG Linkages with other Terrorist Organizations Operating in the Philippines**

The ASG has mutated into a very resilient terrorist organization. Despite heavy military operations and loss of its key leaders, it continues to wreak terrorist havocs in the Philippines. The bombing of Superferry 14 on 27 February 2004 and the three simultaneous bombings in Makati City, General Santos City and Davao City on the eve of Valentines Day celebration in 2005 were just some of the indications that the ASG can still disturb the peace. In the telephone interview pertaining to the Superferry 14 incident, ASG spokesperson Abu Soliaman even taunted the Philippine government by saying, ""Still doubtful about our capabilities? Good. Just wait and see. We will bring the war that you impose on us to your lands and seas, homes and streets. We will multiply the pain and suffering that you have inflicted on our people."<sup>xxiv</sup>

Despite the declining number of ASG operatives due to sustained military crackdown in Sulu, Basilan and Zamboanga City, the group continues to wreak terrorist havoc because of its superb ability to establish strong linkages with other terrorist groups operating in the Philippines. These groups are the JI, the MNLF, the MILF and the RSM. The ASG also has a creative and sophisticated means to solicit local support, which undoubtedly contribute to its resilience as a terrorist organization.

### **ASG Linkages with JI**

ASG linkages with JI have already been excellently discussed by various authors.<sup>xxv</sup> Although the organizational dynamics of JI and ASG are undergoing dramatic changes in the midst of a changing national and regional security environment, latest developments indicate that JI-ASG linkage remains intact and operational. Intelligence sources reveal that the number of JI members in the Philippines collaborating with ASG was placed at 33 as of December 2004. The Philippine National Police Intelligence Group even estimates that the number of JI operatives in the Philippines may be placed at 60 as of April 2005.<sup>xxvi</sup> These JI operatives continue to exploit local Muslim secessionist rebels in the Philippines by sharing their demolition skills.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In connection with the 2005 Valentine's Day bombings, two Indonesians and a Malaysian allegedly belonging to the JI were arrested by intelligence operatives in Zamboanga City on 23 February 2005. But the arrest of Rohmat alias "Zaki" on 16 March 2005 gave a more substantial information about the recent JI-ASG linkages. Zaki, an Indonesian national, confessed to several crimes involving the ASG since 2000, including training members to make bombs in JI-run camps.<sup>xxviii</sup> Known as the "ASG the bomb trainer", Zaki admitted that he trained ASG members in bomb making, particularly the use of mobile phones as detonating devices and the use of toothpaste as bomb paraphernalia."<sup>xxix</sup> He also admitted to having coordinated the 2005 Valentine's Day bombings, which resulted in the brutal death of 10 people and the serious wounding of at least 150 others.

### **ASG Linkages with the MNLF**

It is already well-known that most ASG members are disgruntled members of the MNLF. But their links go beyond that. ASG members continue to connive with MNLF members to plant bombs, kidnap people and commit murder. A police intelligence report reveals that ASG has forged alliances with some gunmen loyal to jailed MNLF

leader Nur Misuari.<sup>xxx</sup> Chief Police Superintendent Rodolfo Mendoza of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) says that alliance between ASG and the MNLF were formed two to three years ago. According to Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor of the Philippine Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF), this alliance is on a tactical or operational level.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Ruland Ullah, a former ASG member and now a state witness to the April 2000 Sipadan hostage crisis, confirms these observations when he says that ASG has hired MNLF fighters to mount terrorist attacks. MNLF members have even acted as mercenaries of the ASG for an amount of at least \$1,000. MNLF members also provide sanctuaries for ASG members when the need arises.<sup>xxxii</sup> They also share fighters to mount terrorist attacks not only in the Southern Philippines but also in Metro Manila.

### **ASG Linkages with the MILF**

Former President Joseph Estrada tried to link the ASG with MILF. But there was no clear evidence of the link during his time. Thomas McKenna, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and author of *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines*,<sup>xxxiii</sup> even said that "It is certainly possible that some disaffected MILF fighters have gone over to the ASG," but "the ASG may be best viewed as a direct challenge to both the MILF and MNLF, not as an adjunct."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

But recent evidences indicate that the ASG has strongly established tactical alliance with the MILF. Although former Secretary of National Defense Eduardo Ermita once argued that MILF members have not shown any proof that they have helped the ASG,<sup>xxxv</sup> new intelligence sources have revealed that ASG and MNLF members have shared fighters in their operations. According to Ullah, "Sometimes the MILF would plant a roadside bomb against soldiers and the Abu Sayyaf would shoot the soldiers wounded in the blast."<sup>xxxvi</sup> MILF and ASG members also receive joint training with JI operatives, particularly in the area of bomb making. In a paper obtained from the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, "During explosives training, JI teaches the MILF or ASG skills in the making of bombs with cell phones, in the identification of the different types of explosives and paraphernalia like TNT, black powder, PETN, Ammonium Nitrate, C4, Detonating Cords, and Detonators."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

At present, the Philippine government is getting a peace deal with the MILF.<sup>xxxviii</sup> ASG leaders think that if the MILF makes peace with the government, they will inherit firebrands in the Southern Philippines. Thus, MILF leader Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim contends that a great deal is needed quickly “before younger Muslims in the region succumb to the greater radicalism of the Abu Sayyaf.”<sup>xxxix</sup> But a top ASG leader exclaims that “If this sell-out succeeds, more blood will flow because the young are more determined *jihadis*. We will soon find out there are more Osama bin Ladens in our midst.”<sup>xl</sup>

### **ASG Linkages with the RSM**

One of the ASG’s newest links is with the Rajah Solaiman Movement or RSM. Intelligence documents describe the RSM as part of the *Balik Islam* Movement (Return to Islam Movement) or *Fi Sabilillah*.<sup>xli</sup> The RSM is a clandestine Muslim organization in Manila collaborating with the ASG in waging urban terrorism. The group is named after Rajah Solaiman, the last king of Manila before the Spanish conquest in the 1500s. Most of its members are Muslim converts. Like the ASG, the converts claim that they want to remake the country into an Islamic state.<sup>xlii</sup> It was estimated that the RSM had at least 70 members in Luzon as of April 2005. The Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA), on the other hand, reports that more than 110,000 Filipinos have converted to Islam as of the first quarter of 2005.

Hilarion del Rosario, Jr. (also known as Ahmed Santos) was the identified leader and founder of the RSM. Santos ran a *madrasa* or Islamic school in Pangasinan, which was raided by Philippine law enforcement operatives in May 2003. An intelligence report states that the RSM was founded in 2002 to “Islamize” the whole Philippines based on the belief that before the Spaniards came with Christianity, there were first Muslims in the archipelago.<sup>xliii</sup>

Reportedly, the RSM has a special operations group and a special action force financed by Saudi Arabian money channeled through various charities in the Philippines. ASG leader Khadafy Janjalani reportedly gave the RSM the equivalent of about \$200,000 for its initial operational activities in Manila, which included the recruitment and conversion of Christians to Islam, then sending them for terrorist training.<sup>xliv</sup> The PNP regards the International Information Center (IIC), a Muslim center based in Quiapo, Manila, as front of the RSM. The Philippine Association of Muslimah Darul

Eeman, Inc. (PAMDAE, Inc.) is also reported to be a front of ASG to recruit Metro Manila based Islam converts in its fold.<sup>xlv</sup> The following *Balik Islam* groups have also aroused official curiosity:

- •Al Maarif Education Center (Baguio City)
- Da’rul Hijra Foundation, Inc. (Makati City)
- Islamic Learning Center (Pangasinan)

The blasting of the Superferry 14 on 26 February 2004 has been described as the handiwork of ASG-RSM conspiracy. Redento Cain Dellosa, an RSM member, confessed that he deliberately planted a bomb on Superferry 14. The Marine Board Inquiry in charge of investigating the Superferry 14 incident confirmed that the ASG masterminded the explosion with the assistance of RSM.

Interestingly, ASG links with RSM also run in the family. Amina Lim Dungon, one of the wives of ASG spokesman Abu Sulaiman, is the sister of Lorraine Lim Dungon, who is a wife of RSM leader Ahmed Santos. ASG leader Khadafy Janjallani’s wife, Zainad Lim Dungon, is a sister of Amina and Lorraine. These make Sulaiman, Santos and Janjallani not only “brothers-in-arms” but also brothers-in-law. Some ICC officers are also kin to Fi-Sabillilah and RSM leaders.<sup>xlvi</sup> According to Chief Police Superintendent Mendoza of the CIDG, “If you make an extended family tree of top Islamic radicals, you will come out with something like a tightly woven spider’s web.”<sup>xlvii</sup>

This view is shared with another top police officer who argues that that ties between ASG and RSM and even MILF and MNLF “are more personal than ideological” because “there are blood ties, and they have an experience of strife with government.”<sup>xlviii</sup> General Florencio D. Fianza, the President’s Special Envoy on Transnational Crime, says that ASG, RSM and even MILF and MNLF help each other to carry out terrorist activities.<sup>xlix</sup> But Fianza contends that though they help each other, they also have their own share of infightings and turf wars.

## **ASG Mass Base**

One important strength of the ASG, despite its small number, is its superb ability to solicit local support. The ASG resorted to kidnapping activities not merely for purposes of committing criminal acts but to use part of its huge ransom money to build-up its manpower and to lure local communities to provide mass support to the organization. When kidnapping activities of the ASG became a lucrative venture, it succeeded in offering monetary compensation to local population to become core members of its mass base support system.<sup>i</sup> Some local government leaders even coddle some ASG members in exchange for monetary payment.<sup>ii</sup> It has been reported that local police and military even provide support to the ASG in return for a cut of its loot and ransom money the group gets.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Confronting the ASG Threat:**

#### **The Philippine Anti-Terrorism Strategy and Its Limits**

To address the threats of terrorism in the Philippines, the Philippine government formed the Inter-Agency Task Force Against International Terrorism on 24 September 2001 under the direct supervision of the Office of the President.<sup>liii</sup> This Inter-Agency Task Force aimed to coordinate intelligence operations and to facilitate the identification and neutralization of suspected terrorist cells in the Philippines. To freeze the financial assets of international terrorists, the Philippine Congress decisively passed the Anti-Money Laundering Act on 29 September 2001. President Arroyo also announced on 12 October 2001 its 14-pillar approach to combat terrorism. (See Box 1)

Through the Operation Center of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (COCIS)<sup>liv</sup> the Philippine government formulated the National Plan to Address Terrorism and its Consequences as Annex K to the National Internal Security Plan (NISP). The Philippine government approved the NISP on 26 November 2001 through Memorandum Order 44. The COCIS was tasked to implement the national anti-terrorism plan by involving all national government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and the private sectors in the campaign.<sup>lv</sup> (See Figure 3)

But the Philippine government abolished the COCIS in October 2004. The task of managing and implementing the anti-terrorism plan was then transferred to the ATTF, which was originally formed on 24 March 2004 under the COCIS. The ATTF is now operating under the Office of the President with the Executive Secretary as the Chair. The ATTF is now based in Malacanang Palace in Manila.

The ATTF aims to establish an extensive anti-terrorism information system and accelerate intelligence fusion among all intelligence units in the Philippines in the identification of terrorism personalities, cells, groups, and organizations in various LGUs. (See Figure 4) It also aims to conduct an extensive information drive at both national and local levels “to prepare the public and all stakeholders to get involved in the national anti-terrorism campaign.”<sup>lvi</sup>

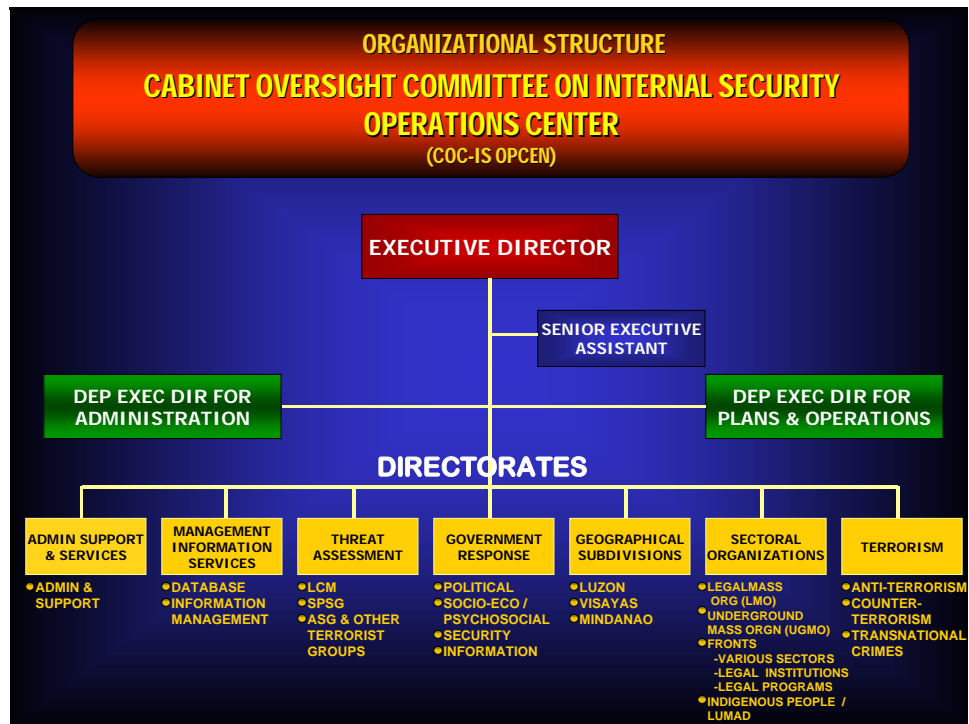
### Box 1. 14 Pillars to Combat Terrorism in the Philippines

- Designates Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security as the lead anti-terrorism body;
- Seeks to undertake consolidate intelligence projects;
- Calls on the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police to address terrorist violence;
- Holds accountable all public and private organizations abetting terrorism;
- Seeks regional consensus. and cooperation especially with Indonesia and Malaysia in the war against terrorism;
- Anticipates legal issues and concerns;
- Pursues Christian-Muslim dialog and seeks to promote ecumenism;
- Calls for greater vigilance and concrete measures against all possible terrorist supplies, materials and finances;
- Mobilizes disaster coordination efforts in the event of catastrophic attack;
- Secures critical infrastructure;
- Protects overseas workers and seeks their immediate transfer if needed;
- Seeks the integration of the global terrorist threat in the AFP/PNP modernization program;
- Asks for media responsibility; and,
- Seeks to address the socioeconomic and political roots of “perceived fanaticism and irrational violence.



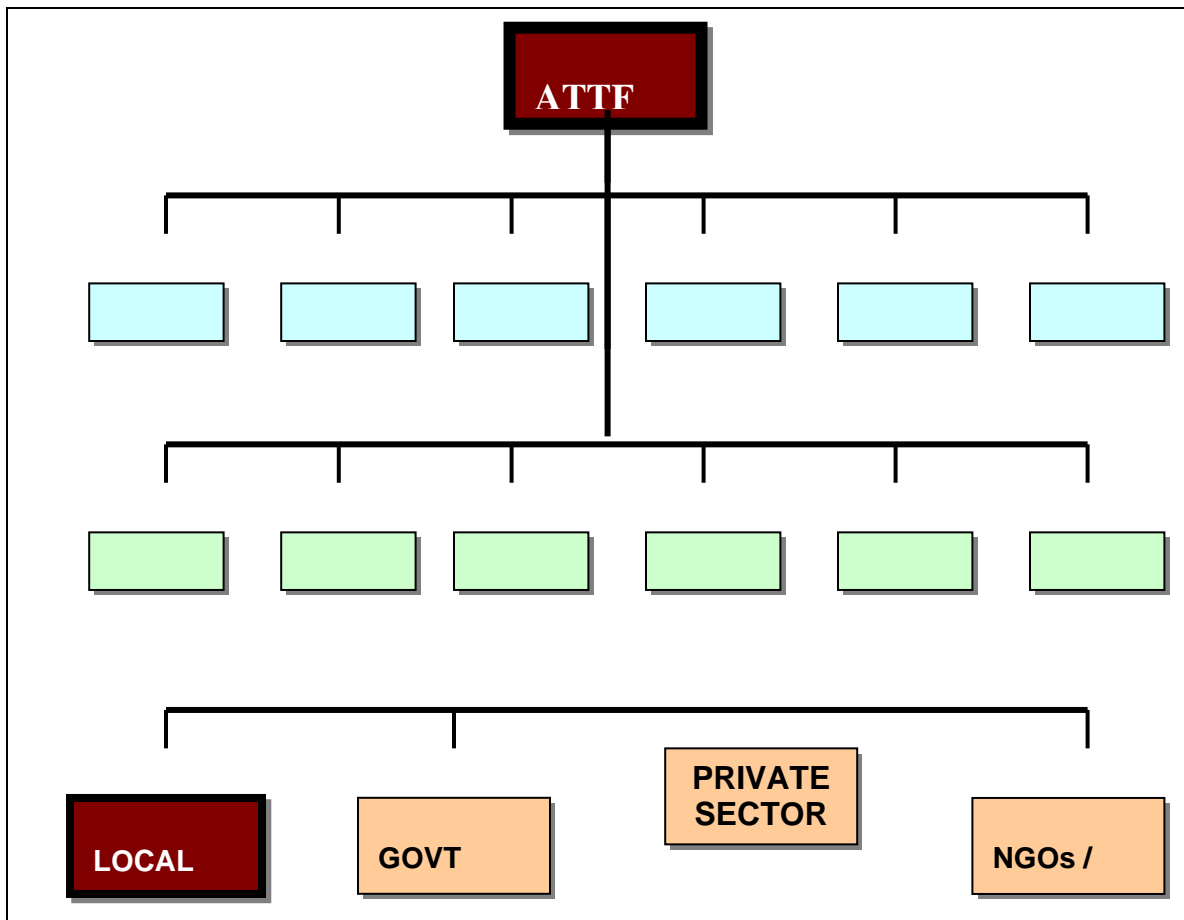
On the basis of the 14-pillar to combat terrorism, the Philippine government also issued General

## On Internal Security



Source: Operation Center, Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security, July 2004

Figure 3. Organizational Structure of the Cabinet Oversight Committee



Legends: AFP - Armed Forces of the Philippines  
 PNP - Philippine National Police  
 NBI - National Bureau of Investigation  
 PCG - Philippine Coast Guard  
 NICA - National Intelligence Coordinating Authority  
 BID - Bureau of Immigration and Deportation  
 TFSCI - Task Force on Security of Critical Infrastructure  
 PCTC - Philippine Center on Transnational Crimes  
 OTS - Office of Transportation Security  
 NACASC - National Civil Aviation Security Committee  
 NDCC - National Disaster Coordinating Agency  
 PIA - Philippine Information Authority

Source: Anti-Terrorism Task Force Accomplishment Report, June 2004

**Figure 4. Organizational Structure of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force**

With the creation of ATTF, the Philippine government adopts the 16-point counter-terrorism program to operationalize the 14-point anti-terrorism policy of the national government. (See Box 2)

### **Box 2. 16-Point Counter-Terrorism Program**

- Supervision and implementation of policies and actions of the government against terrorism
- Intelligence coordination
- Internal focus against terrorism
- Accountability and private corporations and personalities
- Synchronizing internal efforts with global outlook
- Legal measures
- Promotion of Christian and Muslim solidarity
- Vigilance against the movement of terrorist and their supporters, equipment, weapons, and funds
- Contingency plans
- Comprehensive security plans for critical infrastructures
- Support for overseas Filipino workers
- Modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police
- Media Support
- Political, social, and economic measures
- Ensuring the accountability of local and national government in cleaning the government of terrorist and criminal coddlers
- Strengthening the peace process

*Source: Anti-Terrorism Task Force Accomplishment Report. June 2004.*

Through its unrelenting efforts to combat terrorism in the Philippines, the Philippine government has reduced the strength of the ASG. As stated earlier, ASG strength has been reduced to not more than 380 combatants, which can be regarded as a great achievement of the Philippine government in the global fight against terrorism.

But the real success of anti-terrorism campaign in the Philippines depends heavily on strength of its intelligence system. Sadly, Philippine government still has a weak intelligence system being a relatively young republic. Although the Philippine government issued Administrative Order No. 68 on 8 April 2003 to strengthen the

National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), the government's intelligence capability remains weak. Former Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya candidly acknowledged that the non-sharing of intelligence information by military spy units in the Philippines is hampering the government's antiterrorism campaign.<sup>lvii</sup> Abaya said that a culture exists among intelligence units in the Philippines to withhold vital intelligence information from other groups and stressed that "I think we have to improve on our intelligence. The trend now is not the need to know but the need to share. That is the emerging trend among intelligence units all over the world."<sup>lviii</sup> He further lamented that "Sometimes, our intelligence units zealously keep to themselves intelligence information which, if fused with the information of other intelligence units, would give a more comprehensive picture of the enemy."<sup>lix</sup> This problem in Philippine intelligence system still persists but measures have been undertaken to surmount the problem.

Another nagging concern in the Philippines' anti-terrorism campaign is the serious allegation that the military and provincial governments are coddling some ASG members. Based on the report of the International Peace Mission that went to Basilan on 23-27 March 2002, "there are consistent credible reports that the military and the provincial government are coddling the Abu Sayyaf."<sup>lx</sup> Thus, the Peace Mission finds that a military solution to the ASG threat "will not work to solve the problem."<sup>lxi</sup> As early as 1994, in fact, there were allegations that some police and fake police officers were involved in the ASG attempt to smuggle firearms in Zamboanga City from Manila and Iloilo on board the vessel M/V Princess of the Pacific. But the police and the military authorities have stressed that connivance with ASG is not being tolerated and contend that those found guilty of this misdemeanor will be punished accordingly.

The Philippine military has, in fact, recognized that military solutions alone cannot defeat the ASG. In the After Action Report of the ASG Combat Research and Study Group of the Training and Doctrine Command of the Philippine Army submitted on 19 September 2001 to the Commanding General of the Philippine Army, it states that:

*The ASG problem cannot be solved through military solution alone. It should be approached by complementary and mutually reinforcing efforts by the civil agencies and the military. The government must concretely pursue social, economic and political reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of the problem. Effective measures must also be undertaken to ensure the welfare and protection of civilians and*

*reducing the impact of the armed conflict on them. These should necessarily include intensified delivery of basic services to conflict areas.*<sup>lxii</sup>

Finally, one major challenge to the Philippine anti-terrorism campaign is the absence of Philippine anti-terrorism law<sup>lxiii</sup>. To date, at least 15 anti-terrorism bills have been filed in both houses of the Philippine Congress. Most of these bills are identical and are still at the technical working committee levels for further study. These bills have not even reached the first reading despite the President's declaration of these bills as "priority bills". Sadly, all anti-terrorism bills remained at the Technical Working Group (TWG) level for consolidation. As of April 2005, the TWG in charge of consolidating all anti-terrorism bills in the Philippine House of Representatives is still in the snail-pace stage of "consultation in aid of legislation." Philippine Senate President Franklin Drillon even opined that "anti-terrorism bill is not and may no longer be a senate priority."<sup>lxiv</sup> The absence of an anti-terrorism law in the Philippines is the weakest link in the Philippine's anti-terrorist efforts.

The Philippine Congress is also having enormous difficulties passing these bills because of a strong human rights lobby in the Philippines. Some non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and even law-makers from the Philippine party list groups have expressed apprehension that the anti-terrorism law might be used as a pretext to human rights violation. Given the country's recent experience of oppression under Martial Law and the weakness of the Philippine state to address many internal security problems, anti-terrorism law will always be viewed in the Philippines with utmost suspicion and opposition.<sup>lxv</sup>

Because of the absence of anti-terror law in the Philippines, at least five terror suspects who took part in terrorist attacks since 2002 have been released on bail by local authorities. Makati bus bomber Angelo Trinidad, Super Ferry 14 bomber Redondo Dellosa and suspected Lenten bomber Tyrone Santos were just some of the suspected terrorists that were released on bail. According to Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor of the Philippine Anti-Terrorism Task Force, "The absence of an anti-terror law is a big handicap" in the Philippine fight against terrorism." But he exclaims that "it should not stop us" and the AFP will continue to pursue cases against terror suspects.<sup>lxvi</sup>

To surmount the threats posed by ASG and other threats to Philippine internal security, the Philippine government established, as stated earlier, the COCIS. The COCIS adopts the “Strategy of Holistic Approach” (SHA) as the grand strategy to overcome insurgency problems in the Philippines, including the ASG. The SHA consists of four major components:

- Political/Legal/Diplomatic
- Socio-Economic/Psychosocial
- Peace and order/Security, and
- Information.<sup>lxvii</sup>

The political/legal/diplomatic component of the SHA pushes for “political reforms and institutional development to strengthen democratic institutions and empower the citizenry to pursue personal and community growth.” This component aims to develop and propagate Philippine democracy to “confront the communist ideology” and the Islamic fundamentalist ideology. The cornerstone of this particular component is the peace process based on the “Six Paths to Peace” formula:

- Pursuit of social, economic and political reforms;
- Consensus-building and empowerment for peace;
- Peaceful, negotiated settlement with the different rebel groups;
- Programs for reconciliation, reintegration, and rehabilitation;
- Conflict management and protection of civilians caught in armed conflict; and,
- Building and nurturing a climate conducive to peace.

The socio-economic/psychosocial component of the SHA, on the other hand, aims to alleviate poverty in the country through the acceleration of development programs of the Philippine government. This component also aims to develop and strengthen “a

spirit of nationhood among the people, which include developing national character/identity without losing cultural integrity.”

The peace and order/security component aims “to protect the people from the insurgents and provide a secure environment for national development.” More importantly, this component has the specific goal of denying the insurgents “access to their most important resource – popular support.”

Finally, the information component is the integrating component in the SHA. It “refers to the overall effort to advocate peace, promote public confidence in government and support government efforts to overcome insurgency through tri-media and interpersonal approaches.”

The operational aspect of the SHA is the “Left Hand” and “Right Hand” approaches. In an interview, President Arroyo explains these approaches in the following words:

*How do we address this problem (of) insurgency? Through the right-hand and left-hand approach. (The) right hand is the full force of the law and the left hand is the hand of reconciliation and the hand of giving support to our poorest brothers so that they won't be encouraged to join the rebels.*<sup>lxviii</sup>

While the SHA is meant to primarily combat communist insurgency, it is also being applied to address terrorist threats.<sup>lxix</sup> But as stated earlier, the Philippine government abolished COCIS in October 2004. To replace the COCIS in the implementation of SHA in counter-terrorism, the Philippine government transferred the responsibilities to the ATTF. The ATTF is presently the main government body tasked to formulate strategies, policies, plans and measures necessary to prevent and suppress acts of terrorism in the Philippines, particularly those perpetrated by the ASG. But the ATTF, to date, is still undergoing organizational restructuring.

## **Conclusion**

Despite its small number, the ASG remains as a threat to Philippine national security. Though the ASG has lost some of its important leaders, it has managed to wage terrorist attacks because of its ability forge alliances with other terrorist organizations

operating in the Philippines and to solicit mass support. Its new tactics of using front organizations also make the ASG a very resilient terrorist organization in the Philippines.

The Philippine government has waged serious campaigns to address the problem of terrorism in the country. It has made remarkable achievements in neutralizing ASG members and leaders.

But the root of Muslim rebellion, which encourages some Muslim Filipinos to resort to terrorism, has not been satisfactorily addressed by the Philippine government. Though the Philippine government has implemented the strategy of holistic approach to address the problem of Muslim rebellion, the strategy has not been implemented as planned due to budgetary constraints, allegations of corruption in the government, and persistence of violence in the countryside.

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## END NOTES

<sup>i</sup>See for example Djanicelle J. Berreveld, *Terrorism in the Philippines: The Bloody Trail of Abu Sayyaf, Bin Ladens East Asian Connection* (San Jose: Writers Club Press, 2001); Maria Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (New York: Free Press, 2003) and Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: The Crucible of Terror* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2003). For an insightful analysis on the evolution of ASG, see Rohan Gunaratna, "The Evolution and Tactics of the Abu Sayyaf Group", *Janes Intelligence Review* (July 2001). For a very excellent historical analysis, see Graham H. Turbiville, Jr., "Bearer of the Sword", *Military Review* (March/ April 2002), pp. 38- 47. For an analysis of ASG and civil society, see Alfredo Filler, "The Abu Sayyaf Group: A Growing Menace to Civil Society", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Winter 2002). Also see Larry Niksch, "Abu Sayyaf: Target of Philippine-US Anti-



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Terrorism Cooperation”, *CRS Report for Congress* (25 January 2002) and Mark Turner, “Terrorism and Secession in the Southern Philippines: The Rise of the Abu Sayyaf”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (June 1995), pp. 1-19.

<sup>ii</sup>Carl Thayer, “Leadership Dynamics in Terrorist Organizations in Southeast Asia” (Paper presented to the international symposium, “The Dynamics and Structures of Terrorist Threats in Southeast Asia” organized by the Institute of Defense Analyses in cooperation with the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counter-Terrorism and the U.S. Pacific Command held at Palace of Golden Horses Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 18-20 April 2005).

<sup>iii</sup>See Eusaquito P. Manalo, *Philippine Response to Terrorism: The Abu Sayyaf Group* (MA Thesis: Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, California, December 2004).

<sup>iv</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>v</sup>Glenda Gloria, “Bearer of the Sword: The Abu Sayyaf Has Nebulous Beginnings and Incoherent Aims”, *Mindanao Updates* (6 June 2000).

<sup>vi</sup>Quoted in Samuel K. Tan, *Internationalization of the Bangsamoro Struggle* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies, 2003), revised edition, p. 96.

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<sup>vii</sup>See for example, Peter Gowing, *Mosque and Moro: A Study of Muslims in the Philippines* (Manila: Federation of Christian Churches, 1964); Cesar A. Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1973); W.K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of the Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Mehol K. Sadain, *Global and Regional Trends in Islamic Resurgence: Their Implications on the Southern Philippines* (Pasay City: Foreign Service Institute, 1994); Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 1998).; Eric Gutierrez, et al., *Rebels, Warlords and Ulama: A Reader on Muslim Separatism and the War in Southern Philippines* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 2000); Soliman Santos, Jr., *The Moro Islamic Challenge: Constitutional Rethinking for the Mindanao Peace Process* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001).

<sup>viii</sup>I am referring to Samuel K. Tan, “The Juma’a Abu Sayyap: A Brief Assessment of its Origin, Objectives, Ideology and Method of Struggle” (A draft unpublished manuscript, 24 April 2000).

<sup>ix</sup>These intelligence briefings are classified secret. Thus, details of these reports can not be used in this paper.

<sup>x</sup>“Special Report on the Abou Sayaff” (Briefing of MIG9 during the Southern Command Conference, 19 January 1994).

<sup>xi</sup>Marites D. Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* (Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, Institute for Popular Democracy and Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2000) and Mark Turner, “The Management of Violence in a Conflict Organization: The Case of the Abu Sayyaf”, *Public Organization Review*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (December 2003), p. 388.

<sup>xii</sup>Manalo, p. 31.

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<sup>xiii</sup>See for example, Angel Rabasa, “Southeast Asia: Moderate Tradition and Radical Challenge” in Angel Rabasa, et al. *The Muslim World After 9/11* (Santa Monica, RAND: Rand, 2004), Chapter 8. Also see “Inside Abu Sayyaf” at [http://www.inq7.net/specials/inside\\_abusayyaf/2001/features/formative\\_years.htm](http://www.inq7.net/specials/inside_abusayyaf/2001/features/formative_years.htm).

<sup>xiv</sup>Gloria, p. 2.

<sup>xv</sup>Tan, “The Juma’a Abu Sayyap: A Brief Assessment of its Origin, Objectives, Ideology and Method of Struggle”, p. 3.

<sup>xvi</sup>See For example, Turbiville, Jr., pp. 38-47.

<sup>xvii</sup>Jose Torres, Jr., *Into the Mountain: Hostages by the Abu Sayyaf* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2001), p. 35.

<sup>xviii</sup>This section is culled from Rommel Banlaoi, “Maritime Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The Abu Sayyaf Threat”, *US Naval War College Review*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn 2005).

<sup>xix</sup>Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3, *Knowing the Terrorists: The Abu Sayyaf Study* (Quezon City: Headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, undated).

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<sup>xx</sup>To know more about the strategy of the ASG, see Office of the Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Intelligence, *Field Handout: Doctrinal Extract for the Abu Sayyaf Group* (Headquarters of the Philippine Marine Corps, 21 January 2002).

<sup>xxi</sup>Ibid. Also based on various intelligence briefings obtained by the author.

<sup>xxii</sup>“Sabaya’s Death not the End Abu Sayyaf, says Basilan Bishop”, *MindaNews* (29 June 2002) at <http://www.mindanews.com/2002/07/1st/nws29abu.html> <accessed on 30 August 2004>. A very close friend of mine who was a member of the Special Warfare Group (SWAG) who did the actual operation against Abu Sabaya told me that Sabaya was indeed killed in the said battle.

<sup>xxiii</sup>Department of National Defense, *Defense Planning Guide, 2006-2011* (Quezon City: Department of National Defense Office of the Undersecretary for Policy, Plans and Special Concerns, December 2004). This document is classified confidential.

<sup>xxiv</sup>Marco Garrido, “After Madrid, Manila?”, *Asia Times* (24 April 2004) at [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/FD24Ae01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/FD24Ae01.html) <accessed on 28 August 2004>.

<sup>xxv</sup>See Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Zachary Abuza, “Tentacles of Terror: Al-Qaeda’s Southeast Asian Network”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (December 2002), pp. 427-465.; Maria Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda’s Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (New York: Free Press, 2003) and Rommel C. Banlaoi, *War on Terrorism in Southeast Asia* (Manila: Rex Book Store International, 2004).

<sup>xxvi</sup>Interview with Police Chief Superintendent Ismael R. Rafanan, Director of the Philippine National Police Intelligence Group, held at Camp Crame, Quezon City on 1 April 2005.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> Alcuin Papa, “Military: JI Members Still Training Locals”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (18 January 2005).

<sup>xxviii</sup> “Alleged bombs expert for Jemaah Islamiyah regional network arrested in Philippine”, *Channel News Asia* at <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/southeastasia/view/138779/1/.html> <accessed on 12 April 2005>.

<sup>xxix</sup> Interview with General Marlu Quevedo, Chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, held at Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City on 29 March 2005.

<sup>xxx</sup> Jim Gomez, “Filipino Terror Group’s Reach Grown Nationally”, *Associated Press* (8 March 2005).

<sup>xxxi</sup> Interview with Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor of the Philippines Anti-Terrorism Task Force held at Malacanang Palace, Manila on 21 March 2005.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Jomar Canlas, “State Witness Bares MNLF, MILF Links with Abu Sayyaf”, *The Manila Times* (28 March 2005).

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> Thomas M. McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels: Everyday Politics and Armed Separatism in the Southern Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> “Gunning for Glory”, *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* Issue No.548 (23 - 29 August 2001).

<sup>xxxv</sup> “They [MILF] have not shown any proof that they have helped”, *Newsbreak* (10 May 2004).

<sup>xxxvi</sup> “Gunning for Glory”, op. cit.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> A paper obtained from the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines on 29 March 2005.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> See Benedicto R. Bacani, “The Mindanao Peace Talks: Another Opportunity to Resolve the Moro Conflict in the Philippines”, *United States Institute of Peace Special Report*, No. 131 (January 2005).

<sup>xxxix</sup> Simon Elegant, “The Return of the Abu Sayyaf,” *Time Asia* (30 August 2004).

<sup>xl</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>xli</sup>According to Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor of the Philippine Anti-Terrorist Task Force, the difference between the RSM, the Balik Islam Movement and the Fi Sabililah is hard to distinguish.

<sup>xlii</sup>Joe Cochrane, "Filipino Authorities Say The Newest Threat To The Country Is A Shadowy Terror Group Made Up Of Radical Muslim Converts", *Newsweek International Edition* (17 May 2004) at <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/4933472/> <accessed on 28 August 2004>.

<sup>xliii</sup>"Summary of Report on Rajah Solaiman Movement" (12 April 2004) at <http://www.westerndefense.org/articles/PhilippineRepublic/may04.htm> <accessed 31 August 2004>.

<sup>xliv</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>xlvi</sup>A paper obtained from the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, 1 March 2005.

<sup>xlii</sup>Inday Espina-Varona, "Brothers in Arms", *Philippine Graphics*, Vol. 15, No. 38 (28 February 2005), p. 24.

<sup>xlvii</sup>*Ibid.*

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<sup>xlviii</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>xlix</sup>Interview with General Florencio D. Fianza of the Office of the Special Envoy on Transnational Crime on 1 April 2005.

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<sup>l</sup>Department of National Defense, “Info Kit on the Abu Sayyaf Group” (Submitted to the Committee on National Defense and Security of the Philippine Senate on 24 August 2001).

<sup>li</sup>See International Peace Mission, *Basilan: The Next Afghanistan?* (Report of the International Peace Mission to Basilan, Philippines 23-27 March 2002), p. 11. Also at <http://www.bwf.org/pamayanan/peacemission.html> <accessed on 30 August 2004>.

<sup>lii</sup>Madge Kho, “Fighting the Abu Sayyaf: A Pretext for U.S. Intervention In the Philippines” at <http://www.philippineupdate.com/madge.htm> <accessed on 12 May 2005>.

<sup>liii</sup>Rommel C. Banlaoi, *War on Terrorism in Southeast Asia* (Manila: Rex Book Store International, 2004).

<sup>liv</sup>The Philippine government formed the Cabinet Oversight Committee on International Security on 19 June 2001 through Executive Order No. 21. It is chaired by the Executive Security with the Secretary of National Defense as Vice-Chair.

<sup>lv</sup>This section is largely based on Rommel C. Banlaoi, “Local Government Response Against Terrorist Threat in the Philippines: Issues and Prospects” (Paper prepared for presentation at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the East and Southeast Asia Network for Highly Performing Local Governments organized by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Local Government Development Foundation, Rendezvous Hotel, Singapore on 2-3 December 2004).



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<sup>lvi</sup>Inter-Agency Anti-Terrorism Task Force, “Government Response to Terrorism” (undated).

<sup>lvii</sup>Karl B. Kaufman, “Weak’ Intel Blamed On Overzealous Spy Units”, *The Manila Times* (26 March 2004) at [http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2004/mar/26/yehey/top\\_stories/20040326top6.html](http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2004/mar/26/yehey/top_stories/20040326top6.html) <accessed on 30 August 2004>.

<sup>lviii</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>lix</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>lx</sup>For a complete copy of the report, see *Basilan: The Next Afghanistan?* (Report of the International Peace Mission to Basilan, Philippines 23-27 March 2002) at <http://www.bwf.org/pamayanan/peacemission.html> <accessed on 30 August 2004>.

<sup>lxi</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>lxii</sup>ASG Combat Research and Study Group, “After Action Report” (Submitted to the Commanding General of the Philippine Army on 19 September 2001 by the Training and Doctrine Command of the Philippine Army).

<sup>lxiii</sup>Rommel C. Banlaoi, “Legislative Response Against Terrorist Threats in the Philippines: Bridging the Divide Between Human Rights and National Security” (forthcoming).

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<sup>lxiv</sup>Ruth Mercado, “Maritime Enraged on Drillon Barb”, *The Freeman* (6 April 2005) at [http://www.thefreeman.com/local/index.php?fullstory=1&issue=articles\\_20050406&id=28938](http://www.thefreeman.com/local/index.php?fullstory=1&issue=articles_20050406&id=28938). <accessed on 29 April 2005>.

<sup>lxv</sup>For a discussion on the weakness of the Philippine state, see Rommel C. Banlaoi, “Gobalization and Nation-Building in the Philippines: State Predicaments in Managing Society in the Midst of Diversity”, in Yoichiro Sato (ed). *Growth and Governance in Asia* (Honolulu: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004), pp. 203-214.

<sup>lxvi</sup>“DND Pursues Case VS Freed Lenten Bomb Suspect” , *ABS-CBN Interactive* (10 May 2005) at <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/storypage.aspx?StoryId=3822>.

<sup>lxvii</sup>Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security, *National Internal Security Plan (NISP)*, Version 3. RESTRICTED document. Quotations in this particular section come from this document, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>lxviii</sup>Marichu Villanueva, “Palace Announces RP-CPP Peace Talks Resume in Oslo February 10-13”, *The Philippine Star* (6 February 2004) at <http://www.newsflash.org/2003/05/hl/hl019815.htm> <accessed on 17 August 2004>.

<sup>lxix</sup>Department of National Defense “Talking Points on Abu Sayyaf Group” (17 November 2003). This document explains the use of SHA in countering the ASG.

### **PART III**

## **RADICALIZATION OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**



## **RADICALIZATION OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Islamism (or political Islam) has a long history in the Southeast Asian region, going back at least to the anti-colonial independence movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Islamism – the belief that Islamic law and tradition should inform the governmental structures, legal codes, and social mores of a society in some formal way – is not in and of itself a threat to national security or regional stability. Even the more extreme forms of Salafist (puritanical reformist) Islamism are not necessarily a threat provided that they are willing to pursue their goals through legal and peaceful means. It is when Islamist groups abandon the peaceful route and adopt the tactics of terrorism or insurgency that they become a security concern. Conversely, Islamism can also become a threat when its most militant advocates attempt to coopt existing ethno-religious or ethno-nationalist separatist movements and, in so doing, expand their access to the resources and know-how necessary to escalate or expand their campaigns of political violence.

This session focused on the phenomenon of radicalization of political Islam in Southeast Asia in an effort to begin to answer three important set questions. First, is political Islam in the region in fact becoming more radical and militant? Is the popular support for radical Islamism growing in the nations of the region? Second, are terrorist and insurgent groups in the region embracing the al-Qaida ideology of global jihad in pursuit of a single, world-wide Islamic Caliphate? Are new, more militant and violent groups emerging and gaining support? And third, if political Islam in the region is indeed becoming more radical and more militant, what are the primary mechanisms promoting this transformation and what, if anything, can the governments of the region do to counter them?

There is no doubt that long-standing regional and ethnic conflicts in the region have, in recent years, taken on more overt and bitterly sectarian dimensions. Thai Muslims, for example, have increasingly embraced the radical view that they are victims of a campaign of “religious genocide” at the hands of the Thai Buddhist majority. Political and sectarian violence, and the increasing popularity of radical rhetoric, were in part reactions to the economic crisis of 1997 and the collapse of law and order following the demise of the Soeharto regime. External events – especially the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the re-escalation of Israeli-Palestinian conflict – also contributed to an increase in popular expressions of support for radical Islamists and their agendas. For the most part, however, these shifts of public opinion toward increased

radicalism seem to be temporary. Positive views of the United States, for example, increased dramatically following the massive US tsunami relief effort in late 2004 and 2005. Hard core support for radical political agendas seems, for the time being, to be limited across the region.

Previous sessions pointed to a significant increase in tactical cooperation and collaboration between regional terrorist and insurgent groups and global jihadist groups, particularly al-Qaida and JI. The evidence is much less clear-cut, however, that these alliances translate into a united ideological front. Southeast Asian militant and terrorist groups have, for the most part, retained their largely local or national focus. Militancy across the region has historically been the product of frustrated political and economic ambitions. As democratization spread and matures across Southeast Asia, militant movements are gradually losing their ideological relevance and are becoming increasingly politically marginalized. That said, the hard-core, dedicated militants will not give up easily, and enough of them still remain to keep the movements alive for some time.

The key, then, to neutralizing militant groups and their cultures of hate lies in taking steps to ensure that their future recruiting and operating bases shrink. In order to make that happen, however, it is necessary to develop a much better understanding of how individuals make the transition from pious Muslim or mainstream Islamist to violent militant. Since 9/11, the Western press and policymakers have focused on the role of Islamic religious schools (madrassas, pesantrens, pondoks, pusakas) as the primary agents of radicalization across the Muslim world. In the Southeast Asian case, however, their role has been over-emphasized or, at least, misinterpreted. It is not the formal curriculums of these religious schools that foster violent militancy. Rather, it is the informal cultures of hatred and violence that are propagated in small prayer and study groups by a few militant preacher-teachers (ulamas, ustaz) that transform the pious into the deadly. Personal relationships – forged in religious schools, within families and clans, and among those who go to the Middle East or Afghanistan to fight or train – are probably more important agents of radicalization in the region. The making and training of a terrorist is a process heavily dependent on small-group psychology and peer pressure of the kind that comes from direct and continuous personal interaction.

Democratization has also, in the short term, contributed to the recent upturn in militant ideologies and political violence in Southeast Asia. The voters in countries like

Malaysia and Indonesia have made it clear in repeated elections that they prefer a secular nationalist political culture over a theocracy. While the region, like the rest of the Muslim world, has seen an increase in expressions of personal piety and religiosity, most Southeast Asian Muslims, it seems, continue to prefer a more tolerant and moderate political system. Radicals and militants have lashed out in response, in some cases (such as Aceh in Indonesia and Mindanao in the Philippines) by imposing Islamism through violence and intimidation and in others (such as Southern Thailand) by attempting to transform long-standing ethnic and regional conflicts into religious ones.

In order to counter the spread of ideologies of hatred and violence, political and religious authorities in the region must take steps to undermine the simplistic, binary (good vs. evil, us vs. them, West vs. Islam) worldview that militant groups promote. Non-violent Islamist groups must be brought into the political mainstream in Southeast Asia and all the governments of the region must take steps to ensure that all opposition groups, including Islamists, have a legitimate political voice. The United States must also do its part by playing down the religious dimensions of the war on terror and avoiding rhetoric that plays into the hands of militants who claim that the US is at war with Islam. By keeping counter-terrorist strategies from becoming anti-Islamist strategies, the United States can help pave the way for Southeast Asian Islam to settle into its traditionally moderate, tolerant brand of Islam.

In his paper, Asyumardi Azra uses the Indonesian example to lay out the various roles that Islam currently plays in the socio-political life of Muslim societies: as a cultural force, as a foundation for mainstream political parties, and as fuel for radical Islamism. Azra traces the rise of radical Islamism, which seeks political power through violence rather than the ballot box, to the success of the Iranian Islamist revolution in 1979 and, later, to the political and economic disorder that emerged in the wake of the end of the Soeharto regime. Indonesia's Islamist radicals were emboldened by the political vacuum and entertained hopes of repeating Ayatollah Khomeini's success in establishing an Islamic Republic in Indonesia. Azra emphasizes that, to date, radical groups in Indonesia have failed to trigger a grassroots appetite for revolution and some (like Laskar Jihad) have disbanded. To ensure that the trend continues – in Indonesia and throughout the region – it is vital to empower moderate Muslim voices as an attractive and effective alternative to radical ideologies. In particular, Azra urges moderate Muslim scholars, politicians, religious and community leaders to take the lead in challenging the ideologies

of hatred and expose the motives of radical Islamists for what they are: the exploitation of religious in pursuit of naked political power.

Kumar Ramakrishna uses the Indonesian example to demonstrate how four key factors interact to create militant Islamists willing to kill in pursuit of religious and political ideologies. These factors are: historical, political, and social contexts that create dissatisfaction with the status quo; exposure to the militant ideologies of global, Wahhabist, jihadist ideologies; promotion of an extreme binary world view that instills hatred of the “other” as evil and hence sub-human; and the use by elites of techniques of psychological manipulation to strip individuals of their aversion to killing. Ramakrishna concludes by suggesting four alternative strategies for “counter-radicalization:”

- Broaden the world views of socially isolated, radicalized ideological spaces such as the most radical pesantrens;
- Establish an intra-faith dialog in the Muslim community led by scholars and community leaders to challenge and effectively counter the ideologies of hatred;
- Improve the ability of the Indonesian government to provide social services, economic opportunity, and justice in those areas most susceptible to radical messages;
- And improve the image of the United States to make it easier for government officials and community leaders to align themselves with the war on terror.

Sabrina Chua explores the question of whether the Malay-Muslim separatist movement in Southern Thailand has become radicalized and aligned with regional or global khalifist movements in recent years. She uses textual analysis of radical publications and statements over time to determine whether current rhetoric is more radical than in earlier stages of the movement. Chua also traces the roots causes and unfolding of unrest among Muslims in Southern Thailand since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and outlines the most important militant groups in the region. According to Chua, Islam is a key source of group identity and unity among Thai Malays, and religious schools (pondoks) have played an important historical role in identity-building but not, so far, in radicalization. While operational ties to outside groups like al-Qaida and JI seem to be



increasing, Chua concludes that Thai Muslims are culturally disinclined to embrace the strict, puritanical version of Islam that these groups promote. The Muslim separatist movement in Southern Thailand, while increasingly deadly, remains largely an ethno-nationalist rather than jihadist movement.

Kamarulnizam Abdullah argues that the war on terror is currently being undermined by the Western misunderstanding of the nature of the threat. Using Malaysia as his focus, he demonstrates that the US tendency to conflate Islam, radicalism, and terrorism as three parts of a single “Islamic threat” is not only wrong but destructive to cooperation against political violence in Southeast Asia. Islamist radicalism does not in itself cause political violence and militancy. Rather, militant ideologies capitalize on festering discontent that rises from other, often long-standing socio-economic and political root causes. Abdullah urges the United States to shift its strategic posture away from one that focuses on an “Islamist threat” to one that sees al-Qaida and its violent political agenda as what it is – a threat to both the United States and Islam – and seeks to deal with the root causes of terrorism and other political violence. Southeast Asia is the vital second front in the war on terror, and Southeast Asian nations are eager to cooperate with the United States in removing the threat from violent militant political movements, but the US must take the lead in fostering such cooperation and do so in a way that is politically and culturally palatable to the states in the region.

## **RADICALIZATION OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN SE ASIA\***

### **Dynamics of Leadership and Organization**

#### **Azyumardi Azra**

‘Political Islam’, in the Indonesian-Malaysian language ‘*Islam politik*’, is a familiar phrase. The use of the phrase is mostly in contrast to another phrase, that is, ‘cultural Islam’ or ‘*Islam kultural*’. The use of the two phrases indicates that there are two kinds of Islam; political Islam, and cultural Islam. While political Islam is an Islam that has a strong orientation to politics and power, the cultural Islam in contrast is an Islam that is oriented toward developing socio-cultural aspect of Islamic life through non-political means such as peaceful preaching of Islam, educational and economic endeavors.

In the Indonesian context, the use of the phrase ‘political Islam’ has been widespread since the time of Snouck Hurgronje, the most prominent advisor to the Dutch colonial rule on Islamic affairs in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Snouck Hurgronje divides Islam into two parts: the political Islam that must be contained by the Dutch, because this kind of Islam aimed at terminating Dutch colonialism and replacing it with a pan-Islamic political entity, most likely the caliphate (*khilafah*). On the other hand is the Islam ‘*ibadah*’, or ritual Islam, which by extension in the context of a more recent usage, is a ‘cultural Islam’. In contrast to ‘political Islam’ that according to Snouck Hurgronje must be suppressed by any means necessary because it is naturally dangerous, the ruling power should try to accommodate and facilitate the ritual—and for that matter, cultural Islam—as much as possible, or else simply ignore it and leave this latest kind of Islam alone.

My reading on political Islam in Southeast Asia or in Indonesia in particular suggests that one should make two kinds of political Islam. The first one is political Islam represented by Islamic parties that is involved in lawful political process in their efforts to pursue certain political agenda such as the implementation of Islamic law (*shari`ah*) and the creation of an Islamic state. In Indonesia, this kind of political Islam in the 1950s was represented by the old Masjumi and to a lesser degree also the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) party. In the period of Soeharto rule, it was represented by PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, or United Development Party); and in the post-Soeharto period is represented by a number of new Islamic parties, such as PPP, PBB (Moon and Crescent

Party), and PKS (Justice and Welfare Party). In Malaysia this kind of political Islam is for long represented by the PAS party.

The second kind of political Islam represented by various Muslim groups that have similar political agenda mentioned above; as a rule, these groups are not political parties, since they do not recognize the validity of the existing political processes. Neither do they trust Islamic political parties nor Islamic socio-religious organizations; for them all of these Islamic organizations have been too accommodating and too compromising with what they regard as ‘un-Islamic’ political system and political processes.

The second kind of political Islam has been in existence in Southeast Asia as well as in other Muslim areas throughout the world. In Indonesia, during the post-independence period of the 1950s and 1960s this kind of political Islam was mainly represented by various groups of Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, Indonesian Islamic State) or Darul Islam (DI, Islamic state); these groups, independent from any mainstream organization, rebelled against the Indonesian government in their efforts to establish an Indonesian Islamic state.

This kind of political Islam was also in existence during the Soeharto period. Many of them were offshoots of the banned NII or DI rebel groups; and some others were newer groups that had been inspired by political developments at both national and international levels, or in the Muslim world particularly in its encounter with Western political powers. The success of the 1979 Ayatullah Khomeini revolution in Iran was a historical landmark that inspired the formation of the second kind of political Islam not only in the Middle East but also in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia. But these groups both in Malaysia and Indonesia were under very close surveillance of the authorities. In Malaysia they were officially regarded as ‘*aliran sesat*’ (deviant groups); while in Indonesia, the Soeharto regimes labeled them as ‘subversive groups’ that threatened national unity.

The fall of President Soeharto in May 1998 from his more than three decade long-held power, has unleashed the then idle second kind of political Islam in Indonesia. The euphoria of newly-found democracy and lifting of the “anti-subversive law” by President BJ Habibie, who replaced Soeharto, have provided very good ground of these groups to express their extremism and radical discourse and activities in a more visible manners. The lack of law enforcement because of demoralization of the police and military (TNI)

has created some kind of legal vacuum that in turn has been used by the groups to take law into their own hands.

Some of the most important groups of the second kind of political Islam should be mentioned in this account. They are the Lasykar Jihad (LJ), formed by the Forum Komunikasi Ahlul-sunnah Wa al-Jamaah (FKAWJ) under the leadership of Ja'far Umar Thalib; the Front Pembela Islam (FPI/Islamic Defence Front) led by Habib Rizq Shihab; the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI/Council of Indonesian Jihad Fighters) led by Abu Bakar Baasyir; the Jamaah Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia (JAMI) led by Habib Husein al-Habsyi; and the Hizb al-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI/Indonesian Party of Liberation) (Bamualim et al 2001; Azra 2003a; Fananie et al 2002; Jamhari & Jahroni 2004).

It is important to mention that some of these groups have been either disbanded by their own leaders—like the Lasykar Jihad—or have been idle or have been lying low after a number of arrests and trial of perpetrators of the Bali and Marriot Hotel bombings since the late 2002 as mentioned elsewhere in this paper.

Again, it is clear that all of these groups are independent and do not have any connection whatsoever with established organizations like the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and others; nor are they affiliated with Islamic political parties. This indicates that all of these groups do not trust all other established Muslim organizations, both socio-religious and political in nature. This is mainly because in the view of these radical groups—as stated earlier—established Muslim organizations are too accommodating and too compromising in their political and religious attitude vis-à-vis Indonesian political and religious realities.

Political struggles and conflicts among fragmented political groups as well as among the pro- and anti-status quo groups involving also circles in the Indonesian military (TNI) in the aftermath of President Soeharto's fall, provide another impetus for these groups to assert themselves. There are reports that some of these groups were in fact supported—albeit behind closed doors—by certain military circles.

I would suggest that there are at least two categories these groups of radical political Islam; the first group is radical groups that are basically home-grown; this includes the now defunct Lasykar Jihad (LJ), FPI and some other smaller groups. Second group is Middle Eastern affiliated- or oriented groups, like the JAMI—which has its

origin in al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun in Egypt—and Hibz al-Tahrir, which was initially founded in Jordan by Syaikh Taqi al-Din Nabhani in the 1950s.

Despite this categorization, all of these radical groups have a very strong Middle Eastern oriented ideology which they believe as the most genuinely Islamic world-view. Therefore, in terms of religious outlook, they subscribe to the ideology of radical Salafism; and in terms of political view, they are believers in the ideology of *khilafatism* which among their important aims is the establishment of a single, universal *khilafah* (caliphate) for all Muslims in the world (cf Jamhari & Jahroni 2004).

Even though these radical groups aim to establish a *dawlah Islamiyah* of *khilafah* in the region, they are largely different from the old DI/NII movement in Indonesia. Due to conflicts and splits among the ex-DI/NII members resulting from Indonesian intelligence operation as mentioned below, the present radical groups tend to operate independently from older groups (Ausop 2003).

Looking at the whole phenomenon of radicalism among Muslims in Southeast Asia, or in Indonesia in particular, it is clear that it has a long and complex history. The history of radicalism among certain Muslim groups, furthermore, shows that there are many factors, which are responsible for the tendencies. There is strong tendency that the motives of their radicalism are political rather than religious. It is also conspicuous that their radicalism has a lot to do with the disruption of political and social systems as a whole. The absence or lack of law enforcement is certainly an important factor for the radicals to take laws into their own hands in the name of Islam.

### Dynamics of Radical Political Islam

The most notorious terrorist organization in Southeast Asia is, no doubt, the Jamaat Islamiyah (JI). The JI, listed among some other terrorist organizations in the world, has been said to have links with al-Qaeda, led by Usamah bin Laden. It is known that a significant number of JI members have been detained by security agencies in various countries in Southeast Asia; and some of them have brought to trial. It also said that the present leader of the JI is Abu Bakar Baasyir whom in February 2005 was sentenced by a Jakarta court 30 months imprisonment.

Despite all of the evidence provided by police and other law enforcement agencies, Baasyir and his supporters denied time and again that he is the leader of the JI. He admits that he is the leader of the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI/Indonesian Council of Jihad Fighters), but he asserts that MMI is not identical with JI nor it is an offshoot of JI.

Baasyir's role could confuse many. It is known that the late Abdullah Sungkar, a long time friend of Baasyir, had once founded a Jamaah Islamiyah organization. This particular JI is of course different from the very term of '*jama'ah Islamiyah*' that in common sense refers to the flock of Muslims in general. In other words, the Sungkar JI was special organization with certain leadership, structure and membership that was open only for those who were interested in it.

It is clear that Sungkar's JI was little known among Southeast Asian Muslims in general, or particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia. In fact both Sungkar and Baasyir were also little known in dynamics of Islamic movements in Indonesia. It is only following the traffic events of September 11, 2001 in the US, and particularly after President George W Bush declared his war against terrorism, that the name JI as a terrorist organization came to public attention. That is why some Muslims in Southeast Asia are skeptical of the existence of JI. At most, for them JI is only a 'shadowy' organization created by the US intelligence in order to discredit Islam and Muslims.

I have to admit at the outset that it is very difficult to assess the dynamics and structure of terrorist organizations such as JI, because of their nature as clandestine organizations. However, based on police reports, there have been a number of accounts of these very aspects of terrorist organizations. The organization, as a rule, is led by an '*Amir*' (commander) who was assisted by a number of regional deputies (*mantiqi*), who in turn have their own deputies who control their members. It is known that members in general do not have a direct contact with the '*Amir*'; in fact they do not know who the top '*amir*' is. That is why the working of this kind organization is basically through a kind of 'cell system'. Any cell is isolated and does not seem to be aware of other cells; each cell can operate independently.

A number of most recent studies (Ausop 2005; Jamhari & Jahroni 2004; ICG 2004), have shown that certain terrorist groups in Indonesia were in way or another linked to the old Darul Islam (DI) and Tentara Islam Indonesia (TII) that under the

leadership of Kartosuwirjo in the 1950s rebelled against the Republic of Indonesia. Even though the Indonesian military was able to crush the rebellion that aimed to create a Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, or Islamic state in Indonesia), many of former members of DI/TII survived the passage of times.

Despite their survival, the absence of a single strong leadership has caused a lot of divisions among the ex-DI/TII members. In addition, the debates over strategy among them – whether or not continued to use radical approach such as violence, terrorism or rebellion, or to employ a peaceful approach in their efforts to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia – has exacerbated the splits and conflicts that continue even until today.

One of the groups of ex-DI/TII or NII members that continued to use terrorist approach was the so-called ‘Komando Jihad’ (Jihad Command) that conducted a series of terrorist activities in the 1970s such as the attack on a Police Station in Bandung and hijacking of Garuda airplane in Bangkok. Not much is known about the group, also called as the ‘Warman group,’ but there is a lot of suspicion among Muslims in Indonesia that this particular terrorist group consisted of former DII/TII or NII members who had been recruited by certain generals in Soeharto circles. By inciting them to conduct terrorism, it is believed, that Islam could be discredited; this, in turn would justify the Indonesian military to contain and control Islam and the Muslims.

Abdullah Sungkar was also reportedly recruited by Soeharto’s generals. Together with Abu Bakar Baasyir, Sungkar was initiated by Haji Ismail Pranoto (Hispran) into the NII movement in the middle of the 1970s. While Hispran was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1978 for his involvement in the ‘Komando Jihad’, Sungkar and Baasyir in the early 1980s were able to form their own NII group that controlled all areas of Central Java and Yogyakarta (Nursalim 2001; Jamhari & Jahroni 2004:56-7).

Looking at Sungkar and Baasyir activities during Soeharto period, it is clear that both fell short of conducting violent or terrorist activities. Rather, they chose to be very critical of the Soeharto government. They generally opposed most of Soeharto’s policies; as result they were put behind bars for four years in 1978. Released from prison in 1982, Sungkar and Baasyir continued with their bitter opposition to Soeharto administration and formed the so-called ‘*usrah*’ (lit., ‘family’) groups in their efforts to form an Islamic state in Indonesia. In 1986, the Soeharto regimes arrested many of the ‘*usrah*’ leaders on account of their ‘subversive activities’; but both Sungkar and Baasyir were able to escape

to Malaysia, where they lived for the next 15 years, and returned only to Indonesia in 1999 after the fall of the Soeharto regime.

Another group of former NII members is the so-called NII KW 9 group that was led by Abu Toto whose original name is AS Panji Gumilang. While no one knows for sure whether or not this group has abandoned the idea of an Indonesian Islamic state, it obviously chose to employ peaceful means through *dakwah* (preaching) activities, mainly educational. Panji Gumilang to the astonishment of many Muslims founded the az-Zaitun Pesantren in Indramayu, known not only for its spectacular building complexes, but also for its alleged deviation from Islamic teachings. After tedious investigation by the authorities and the Research Body of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the conclusion is that they found nothing wrong with its religious belief and practices.

### Radicalization of Political Islam

Again, one has to admit that the rapid political changes that have been taking place at the national, regional and international levels, especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, have indeed witnessed the radicalization of the second kind of political Islam mentioned earlier. The arrest and trials of a number of individuals and groups in Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Indonesia for alleged involvement in terrorism has increasingly indicated that they have regional links with each other as well as with international terrorist groups.

The investigation by Indonesian police of the Bali bombings on October 12, 2002, for instance, so far seems to disclose the complex connections between militant individuals and groups that later also carry out violent and terrorist activities including Marriot and Kuningan bombings in Jakarta. A clearer picture of the radical networks appears. There are at least two conspicuous patterns uncovered from police investigation of the bombings. Firstly, some of the perpetrators of the bombings are alumna of the Ngruki Pesantren in Solo Central Java, the chief of which is Abu Bakar Baasyir, who as mentioned above is widely regarded as the spiritual leader of Jama'ah Islamiyyah, the core of radical groups in Southeast Asia. Secondly, some of the perpetrators had been living in Malaysia in the period of Abu Bakar Baasyir's self-exile, escaping President Soeharto's harsh measures. Thirdly, some of the perpetrators of the bombings were



veterans of the war against Soviet Union in Afghanistan (Azra, 2003b; ICG August 2002; ICG December 2002; Nursalim 2001).

The perception of the radicalization of this kind of political Islam among certain Indonesian or Southeast Asian Muslim groups appears rapidly after the September 11, 2001 events. The perception grows stronger in the successive events in the aftermath of “Nine-Eleven”, especially the Bali bombings that left almost two hundred innocent people dead. The bombings at a McDonald’s outlet and Haji Kalla car show room in Makasar, South Sulawesi, on the eve of ‘Id al-Fitr (December 5, 2002), followed by Marriot Hotel bombing in Jakarta in 2003 and lastly at Kuningan or at the front of Australian Embassy in Jakarta recently (September 9, 2004), have furthermore confirmed the tendencies of terrorism among certain radical individuals and groups in Indonesia. This is due to the result of police investigation in Indonesia that shows that perpetrators of these terrorist acts are individuals who have been known to be members of certain radical groups.

Again, there is little doubt that the September 11, 2001 attacks on US has rapidly radicalized certain individuals and groups among Muslims in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia. The American military operation in Afghanistan following the attacks on World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC has unfortunately given momentum for the radicals to assert themselves more clearly. The Bush administration’s subsequent attack in March 2003 against Iraq has further fueled bitter resentment toward the US and symbols that they consider as representing American imperialist arrogance such as McDonald or Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets among the radicals as have the arrests of a number of suspected radicals in Malaysia, Singapore, and Philippines.

One should not be misled, however, by these current developments; in fact, radicalism among Indonesian Muslims in particular is not new. Even though Southeast Asian Islam in general has been viewed as moderate and peaceful Islam, the history of Islam in the region shows that radicalism among Muslims, as will be discussed shortly, has existed for at least two centuries, when the Wahabi-like Padri movement, in West Sumatra in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> held sway to force other Muslims in the area to subscribe to their literal understanding of Islam. This violent movement aimed at spreading the pure and pristine Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (the *salaf*). The Padri, however, failed to gain support from the majority of

Muslims; and, as a result, the Padri movement was the only precedent of Salafi radicalism throughout Southeast Asia.

The Padri movement was a shift in the continued influence of Middle Eastern Islam on the course of Southeast Asian Islam. As I argued elsewhere (Azra 2004), from the 16<sup>th</sup> century up to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Islam in the Middle East exerted very strong influence on Islamic intellectualism and religious life in Southeast Asia, mainly through complex networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian *`ulama`*. The Malay-Indonesian *`ulama`* involved in the networks played a crucial role in the peaceful reforms of Islamic intellectualism and life in Southeast Asia. I should mention, however, that toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the discourse on *jihad* (war) was introduced by such prominent Malay-Indonesian scholars as `Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani and Daud ibn `Abd Allah al-Patani as a response to the increased encroachment of European colonialism in Southeast Asia; the *jihad* was not directed against other Muslims, however. Therefore, it is the Padri of West Sumatra who set the precedence in Southeast Asia by launching the *jihad* against their fellow Muslims.

### Politico-Religious Roots of Radicalism and Terrorism

The root causes of radicalism among Muslims in modern times are very complex. The complexity is even greater at the present time because of many driving factors that are working to influence the socio-historical course of Muslim societies as a whole. In the past, before the modern period, the factors of radicalism were mainly internal – that is, a response to internal problems that were faced by the Muslims such as the rapid decline of Muslim political entities and ensuing conflicts among Muslims. Many Muslims in the pre-colonial time strongly believed that the sorry situation of the Muslim world had a lot to do with the socio-moral decay of Muslims themselves resulting from their wrong religious belief and practices; according to this argument, many Muslims had abandoned the original and real teachings of Islam.

As a result, some Muslims felt it necessary to conduct *tajdid* (renewal) or *islah* (reform) not only through peaceful means, but also by using force and other radical means they considered to be more effective, for instance, by declaring *jihad* (war) against Muslims who were regarded as having gone astray. Islam, of course, emphasizes the need for Muslims to renew their beliefs and practices; in fact, in one of his *hadith* (tradition),

the prophet Muhammad states that there would be a reformer or renewer (*mujaddid*) of Islam, coming at the end of every century to renew and revitalize Islam. But at the same time, it is clear that Islam prohibits the use of radical and violent means in the efforts to renew and reform Islam.

One of the strongest tendencies in the discourses and movements in Islamic renewal and reforms is the orientation towards pure and pristine Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (the *salafs*). That is why most of the Islamic renewal movements are called as “*Salafiyyah*” (or Salafi, or Salafism). There is a very wide spectrum of Islamic discourses and movements that can be included in Salafiyyah (Cf ICG 2004; Jamhari & Jahroni 2004). One can make a distinction of “classic Salafiyyah” and “neo-Salafiyyah”; or “peaceful Salafiyyah” and “radical Salafiyyah”. The Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula that gained momentum in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century can be categorized as both classic and radical Salafiyyah. The same is the case with the Padri movement in West Sumatra in the successive period as described briefly above. The Wahhabi-like Padri movement can be conveniently categorized as the “classic Salafism”, in which the internal factor with the Muslim *ummah* was its driving force.

The spectrum of “neo Salafiyyah” discourses and movements is certainly very complex. The term “neo” in the first instance refers to the modern period, beginning with the harsh encounters between Muslim societies and Western colonial powers from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. During this period, the external factors—associated mostly with the Western world—that could incite radicalism increasingly become more and more dominant. In fact, the West has been accused by many Muslims of being responsible for many problems that Muslims have been facing in the last several centuries. Confronting continued Western domination and hegemony, many Muslims were afflicted by a kind of defensive psychology that lead to, among others, the belief of the so-called “conspiracy theory”.

There were of course outbursts of Muslim radicalism in Southeast Asia in the period of the 19<sup>th</sup> and before World War II during the heyday of European colonialism in the region. These were a different kind of radicalism; they were in fact *jihads* to liberate Muslim lands (*dar al-Islam*) from the occupation of the hostile infidel European coming from the lands of war (*dar al-harb*). According to classical Islamic doctrines, *jihad* against hostile infidels is justified and, in fact, it is considered as just wars; the *jihads* of this kind are believed as wars in the way of God (*jihad fi sabil Allah*).

Looking at the whole history of radicalism among Muslims, I would argue that radicalism among Muslims is more political rather than religious. In some instances, the original motive could be religious, but soon becomes very political. Political developments in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia after World War II had been important factors of the rise of new kind of radicalism among Muslims. Disappointed with the Indonesian military policies of rationalization of paramilitary groups following Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945, Kartosuwirjo in the name of Islam rebelled against the government. This was the origin of the Dar al-Islam (DI, or Islamic State) or Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, Islamic State of Indonesia) and Indonesian Islamic Army (Tentara Islam Indonesia/TII) that aimed at establishing an Islamic state, *dawlah al-Islamiyah*, in Indonesia. Even though the rebellious movement spread to South Sulawesi and Aceh in the 1950s, it failed to gain support from the majority of Indonesian Muslims, who after a bitter struggle in the last year of Japanese occupation had lastly accepted Pancasila (“five pillars”) as the national ideology. As a result, the Indonesian army was able to crush these radical movements.

The idea of the establishment of Islamic state (*dawlah al-Islamiyyah*) is one of the most crucial issues that is on and off among certain groups of Muslims in Indonesia. Certain groups among the moderates, such as the Masjumi party under the leadership of Mohammad Natsir, for instance, also attempted to transform Indonesia into a *dawlah al-Islamiyyah*. It is important to point out that the attempts were carried out through legal and constitutional ways, more precisely, through parliament. But they failed to implement the idea, mainly because Islamic parties had fallen into quarrels and conflicts among themselves and, therefore, failed to gain a majority in national election of 1955, thus, also in the parliament.

It is important to note that despite that failure, the moderate Muslim leaders in the 1950s did not resort to illegal means, such as armed rebellion, to transform Indonesia into an Islamic state. In contrast, there was growing tendency among them to accept Pancasila as final political reality. At the same time, however, there remain individual and Muslim groups who keep the idea of establishing an Islamic state Indonesia alive. Depending on political situation at any particular point in time, these people can operate underground or openly in achieving their goals. They may also collaborate with certain elements of unhappy military persons or even with other radical groups which, in terms of ideology, are incompatible with theirs; this awkward collaboration can be called as “marriage of convenience”, or in Islamic terms as “*nikah mut`ah*”. Therefore, one should be very

careful in analyzing and understanding radical groups; some of them could be genuine, motivated mostly by religious reason, but some others could be “engineered” radicals sponsored by certain individuals and groups of people for their own political ends.

The Soeharto New Order regime, at least through the 1970s and 1980s, was not on good terms with Muslim political forces in general. In fact there was a lot of mutual suspicion and hostilities between the two sides. President Soeharto took very harsh measures against any expression of Islamic extremism. But at the same time—as mentioned earlier—it is widely believed among Muslims that certain military generals such as Ali Murtopo and Benny Moerdani recruited ex DI/TII to form “Komando Jihad” (Jihad Command), conducting subversive activities in order to discredit Islam and Muslims (Ausop 2003).

### Networks of the Radicals

A series of terrorist bombings in Indonesia, beginning in Legian, Bali, on October 2002 followed by Marriot Hotel in Jakarta in 2003, and lastly at the front of Australian embassy in Jakarta (September 9, 2004), is certainly a sad human tragedy in contemporary Indonesia. In fact, the bombing reflects a new phase of violence and terror in the country. This can be seen not only in the relatively large number of the victims, but also in the use of lethal weapons by the terrorists to afflict the greatest psychological impacts both domestically and internationally. Worse still, there is suspicion that one of the perpetrators was a suicide bomber, reminding one of the Palestinian suicide bombers. It is difficult for Indonesian people to grasp that certain individuals among them are increasingly becoming so ruthless and inhumane.

However, after intensive police investigation, the Bali, Marriot and Kuningan bombings, for several reasons, could be a “blessing a disguise”. *First*, police have been able not only to catch the alleged perpetrators of the bombing, but also to reveal some fresh evidence of the networks of the radicals in Indonesia and Southeast Asia in the general. The revelation of the networks has been crucial for establishing the fact that the networks of the radicals have been working in Southeast Asia, or in Indonesia in particular, in the last several years to achieve their ends, the most important of which is an “Islamic State of Nusantara” that would consist of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei

Darussalam, Singapore and, probably also the Muslim area of South Philippines (Azra 2003b).

A great deal of credit, then, must be given to the police who have been working tirelessly to investigate the case and have been successful in uncovering the links between one perpetrator and another. After a series of unsolved bombings since the fall of President Soeharto from power in 1998, the police more recently have been able – with the help of their counterparts from Australia and elsewhere – to uncover the links of the Bali blast, Marriot and Kuningan bombings with some other bombings in the country in the post-Soeharto period. It is unfortunate, however, that until now the alleged two actors of these series of bombings, Dr. Azahari and M. Nurdin Top (both are Malaysian citizens) are still at large.

*Second*, the revelation of the networks of the radicals by the police in an apparently convincing way has silenced most of the skeptics, who from the very day of the Bali blast have maintained that the bombing was simply a US or Western plot to discredit Islam and destroy the image of Muslims in the country. The “skeptics”, some of them prominent Muslim leaders, who seem to believe in the so-called “conspiracy theory” in fact had accused President Megawati government of being slavishly surrendered to the pressures and wishes of President Bush of the US in particular. This kind of accusation has also been put into air against Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) during Indonesian Presidential election of 2004; but it failed to resonate with the people, and SBY won the election.

The disclosure of networks of radicals now apparently shows that the “conspiracy theory” does not ring true. The statements of Amrozi, Imam Samudra and their accomplices, involved in the Bali and other bombings, make it clear that the bombings have been motivated by both “genuine” radicalism and hatred against the US and other Western powers. The fact that the perpetrators show no remorse for their innocent victims has further strengthened that they have been strongly motivated by their own violent ideology rather than by anything else.

*Third*, the revelation of the radical networks points to the fact that there are indeed terrorists among Indonesians who happen to be Muslims and who are more than happy to use violent means to achieve their ends. Before the police disclosure, there had been widespread reluctance among leaders of Indonesian Islam to admit that there are terrorists

among Indonesian Muslims who have misused the teachings of Islam to justify their terrorist activities. In fact, some prominent Muslim leaders have issued statements that could create a false impression to the public in the general of not only defending the radicals but also condoning violence and terrorist acts.

### **Empowerment of the Moderates**

It is now the right time for Indonesian and other Southeast Asian Muslim leaders, the bulk of whom are moderate, to admit that there is a serious problem of radicalism among certain Muslim individuals and groups. This problem should be fairly addressed by moderate Muslim leaders hand in hand with law enforcement agencies for the sake of the image of Islam as a peaceful religion and of Indonesian and Southeast Asian Muslims as the “Islamic people with a smiling face”. The problems of radicals are apparent at two levels. First, they abuse and manipulation of certain Islamic doctrines to justify radicalism and terrorism. This abuse undoubtedly comes from literal interpretation of Islam. Second, they use violence and terrorism to achieve their ideological goals, which undoubtedly runs contrary to Islam.

Therefore, it is high time for moderate Muslim leaders to say more clearly and loudly that literal interpretation of Islam will only lead to extremism that is unacceptable to Islam, and that Islam can not condone, let alone justify, any kind of violent and terrorist acts. There is absolutely no valid reason for any Muslim to conduct activities that harm or kill other people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Any kind of resentment and deprivation felt by any individual and group of Muslim cannot and must not justify any kind of desperate and inhuman act.

Furthermore, the moderate Muslim leaders should not be misled by the claims and assertion of the radicals. The radicals are shrewd not only in abusing Islamic doctrines for their own ends, but also in manipulating Muslim sentiment through the abuse and manipulation of mass media, particularly television. The claims that the arrest of certain radical leaders means the suppression of Islam and the ‘*ulama*’ (Muslim religious scholars) are very misleading. Similarly, the claims that the police investigation in Indonesia of certain *pesantren* (Islamic traditional boarding school) in the search of the perpetrators of the bombings is the initial step of hostility and suspicion against the whole *pesantren* system are even more misleading.

The identification of radical leaders and groups with Islam and '*ulama*' is again very misleading. In fact the radicals are only a very small fraction of the ocean of moderate Muslims who from their sheer number can be fairly regarded as the embodiment of the peaceful nature of Indonesian or Southeast Asian Islam. Therefore, the moderate should be very careful not to support any impression that could lead to the identification of the radicals with Islam and Muslims at large.

Some have argued that the defensive attitude of certain moderate Muslim leaders, particularly in Indonesia, originates from the trauma of political engineering and abuses by the police and military of the Muslims during the Soeharto period. This argument, I believe, seems not to be relevant with Indonesian political situation in the post-Soeharto period. There is no evidence that the Megawati Soekarnoputri regime was hostile to Islam and Muslims. In fact President Megawati seemed to have been very sensitive to Muslim issues compared for instance to President Abdurrahman Wahid. Lacking Islamic credentials, President Megawati in fact prevented herself from making statements, let alone policies, that could spark opposition from Muslims in general. The case is seemingly also true with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who is very close to Muslim groups and in fact makes political alliances with Islamic parties like the Moon and Crescent Party (PBB) and the Justice Party (PKS).

But, there was of course a lot of criticism especially to President Megawati Soekarnoputri who was regarded to be very hesitant and indecisive to take any harsh measures against the radicals, because she was worried—it seems—of the possible backlash from Muslim public. It appears that she did not realize that the moderate Muslim leaders and organizations are more that willing to rally behind her in the opposition against any kind of religious extremism and radicalism. This had been made clear by statements of Hasyim Muzadi (national chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama/NU) and Syafii Maarif (national chairman of Muhammadiyah) since the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks in the US that Indonesian Islam can not accept any kind of religious extremism. Furthermore, the two largest Muslim organizations, representing some 70 million Indonesian Muslims, have reached an accord to tackle religious radicalism through their various policies and programs.

Therefore, moderate Muslim leaders should support law enforcement agencies in bringing perpetrators of terrorism to justice. I suggest that one of the most important root causes of violence and terrorism in present day Indonesia is the almost absent of law



enforcement and, worse still, impunity. In fact the vacuum of law enforcement and of decisive act of the police have been an important *raison d'être* for certain radical groups to take the law into their own hands through unlawful activities such as the raids on discotheques, nightclubs, and other places the radicals believe as the places of social ills.

Above all, the future of moderate and peaceful Indonesian Islam is much dependent on the fair, objective, pro-active attitude of the moderate majority to respond to any development of among Muslims in the region. The reactionary and defensive attitude is not going to help in the efforts to show to the world that Islam is a peaceful religion and that Muslims are peace loving people. Again, it is time for the moderate to be more assertive to lead the way to reestablish the peaceful nature of Indonesian or Asian Islam in general.

\*Shorter versions of this paper was presented at International Conference “The Future of Islam, Democracy, and Authoritarianism in the Muslim World” International Center for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP) Jakarta, 6-7 December, 2004; and the 17<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Roundtable “Confidence Building and Conflict Resolution”, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia, 6-9 August, 2003.

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## Anatomy of Islamist Radicalization in Southeast Asia: An Indonesian Example<sup>1</sup>

Kumar Ramakrishna

There is no doubt that the Muslims' power irritates the infidels and spreads envy in the hearts of the enemies of Islam – Christians, Jews and others – so they plot against them, gather [their] force against them, harass them and seize every opportunity in order to eliminate the Muslims. Examples of this enmity are innumerable, beginning with the plot of the Jews against the Messenger and the Muslims at the first appearance of the first light of Islam and ending with what is happening today – a malicious Crusader-Jewish alliance striving to eliminate Islam from all the continents. Those massacres that were directed against the Muslim people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Muslims of Burma and the Philippines, and in Africa, are the greatest proof of the malice and hatred harbored by the enemies of Islam to this religion.<sup>2</sup>

As we shall see in this essay, the theme embedded in the above passage – of a global Islamic community or *ummah* being subjected to vicious oppression by the “Crusader-Jewish alliance” – is one that animates radical Islamist ideologies that drive terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda and its Southeast Asian affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah. However, as this essay will show, simply buying into a virulent religious-ideological worldview per se does not *ipso facto* make one a terrorist capable of killing innocent civilians, even women and children, in God's name. A complete radicalization process must take place that transforms the religiously motivated hater into a religiously motivated killer. This essay sets for itself the task of uncovering the dynamics of this radicalization process by analyzing the important case of Indonesia – the world's most populous Muslim country and one where the eventual outcome of the contest between radical and progressive versions of Islam may well have longer term consequences for the Global War on Terror. In particular, the essay will in the following pages, develop the argument that Islamist radicalization in Indonesia results from the interplay of four

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<sup>2</sup> Extract from a Saudi eighth-grade text, *Geography of the World*, cited in Andrew Coulson, “Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World: Is There a Problem? What Can We Do About It?”, *Policy Analysis*, No. 511 (11 March 2004), p. 9.

factors: important historical, political and socio-cultural factors predisposing certain *communities of concern* within Indonesia toward radicalism; exposure to globalized Wahhabi ideology; the extremist binary worldview driving key elites of more narrowly focused *constituencies of hatred*, and the deliberate manipulation by those elites of psychological processes by which the normal social sanctions against killing are disengaged.

### **Radical Islam in Indonesia: A Brief History<sup>3</sup>**

Beginning around the 14th century Islam came to Southeast Asia by way of West and Central Asian traders who ensured that religious considerations were not permitted to hinder commercial exchange. Over time, Islam, in especially the rural hinterlands of Southeast Asia, accommodated existing traditions deriving from other faiths such as Hinduism and Buddhism. In this way unique Southeast Asian varieties of Islam emerged, which some considered to be “basically, tolerant, peaceful, and smiling.”<sup>4</sup> This is not to imply, however, that Southeast Asian Islam in general, and Indonesian Islam in particular, lacked more radical variants. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, considerable intellectual exchange took place between *Haramayn*-based clerics and Malay-Indonesian students and *ulama*, and one result of this was the emergence, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, of the so-called Padri movement in West Sumatra in Indonesia. The Padris were strict reformists who emphasized a return to the purist Islam practised by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (the *salaf*). The Padris were quite willing to coerce fellow Muslims to return to the so-called fundamentals of Islam. In fact it is said that the Padri movement resembled the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Parts of this analysis are adapted from the author’s chapter in J. Forest, “The Making of the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist”, in J. Forest (ed.), *Teaching Terror: Knowledge Transfer in the Terrorist World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “The Megawati Presidency: Challenge of Political Islam”, paper

delivered at the “Joint Public Forum on Indonesia: The First 100 Days of President

Megawati”, organized by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore) and the

Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Jakarta), 1 November 2001, Singapore.

<sup>5</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam: Debunking the Myths”, in *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, ed. by Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan (Singapore: World Scientific/Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2003), pp. 46-47.

In addition, Cairo proved a rich source of the reformist discourse of “modernist Islam” or “Islamic modernism”, which emerged in Indonesia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The modernists, animated by pan-Islamic concerns, sought to revive and restore Islamic civilization in the face of global Western Christian ascendancy. To this end, within Indonesia, they tried to “purify” Islam of the indigenous beliefs, customs and Sufi-inspired practices that had been absorbed over the previous centuries.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, the modernists sought an accommodation between Islamic revival and modern science and technology.<sup>7</sup> Modernist Islam spawned Indonesian Muslim mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah in 1912 and Al-Irsyad a year later.<sup>8</sup> Muhammadiyah “advocated the purification of Islam through the literal adoption of the lifestyle and teachings of the Prophet and the analytical application of the Koran and the Sunnah to contemporary problems.”<sup>9</sup> It should be noted however, that Muhammadiyah over time became “domesticated” and accommodated “local concerns, including the adoption of Sufi practices”.<sup>10</sup> Harder-edged, less compromising Islamic modernist streams persisted however. In 1923 another reform movement drawing inspiration from Islamic modernism, the Islamic Union (Persis), emerged in East Java. Persis focused most of its energy and resources into propagating “correct” doctrine and practice. Persis has been described as the most “puritan” of Indonesian reform movements.<sup>11</sup>

After World War Two, Masjumi (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations) emerged as the main Islamic modernist political party. Its key leaders such as Mohammad Natsir and A. Hassan were linked with Persis. In fact Persis formed the “backbone” of Masjumi throughout its existence.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the 1950s, Masjumi leaders clashed with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and President Sukarno, a secular nationalist who opposed attempts to make Islamic or *shariah* law the basis of the Indonesian constitution. Sukarno banned Masjumi at the end of the 1950s, following the

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<sup>6</sup> Barry Desker, “Countering Terrorism: Why the ‘War on Terror’ is Unending”, unpublished paper, September 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Symonds, “The Political Origins and Outlook of Jemaah Islamiyah”, *World Socialist Website*, Part 2, 13 November 2003, available at [www.wsws.org/articles/2003/nov2003/ji2-n13\\_prn.shtml](http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/nov2003/ji2-n13_prn.shtml) (accessed 20 August 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Desker, “Countering Terrorism”.

<sup>10</sup> Desker, “Countering Terrorism”.

<sup>11</sup> Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 43; Martin van Bruinessen, “‘Traditionalist’ and ‘Islamist’ pesantren in contemporary Indonesia”, paper presented at the ISIM workshop on “The Madrasa in Asia”, 23-24 May 2004.

<sup>12</sup> “Rais Wins More Support”, *Laksamana.Net*, 8 June 2004, available at [http://www.laksamana.net/vnews.cfm?ncat=2&news\\_id=7123](http://www.laksamana.net/vnews.cfm?ncat=2&news_id=7123) (accessed 12 Aug 2004)

involvement of some of its leaders in a short-lived US-backed rebellion in Sumatra.<sup>13</sup> The banning of Masjumi in 1960<sup>14</sup> did not eliminate the Masjumi/Persis ethos, however. The latter was kept alive in the form of the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII) and in the parallel Darul Islam (DI) movement. The DDII was set up in February 1967 by a Masjumi/Persis clique of activists led by Mohammad Natsir. Rather than seeking political power outright, DDII sought to engage in *dakwah* or proselytising in order to turn Indonesians into better Muslims. To this end it set up a network of mosques, preachers and publications. The reason why DDII adopted a bottom-up, gradual Islamization approach was because its leaders realized, following the failures of Muslim politicians to enshrine the so-called Jakarta Charter in the Indonesian constitutional debates of 1945 and 1959 that a top-down Islamization approach simply would not appeal to the vast masses of nominal Indonesian Muslims. Hence bottom-up *dakwah* was a better way of transforming society.<sup>15</sup> DDII was characterized especially by a fear of Christian missionary efforts amongst Indonesian Muslims. Over time it even became increasingly drawn to Saudi-style Wahhabism.<sup>16</sup> In fact the DDII subsequently established close ties with the Saudi-based World Islamic League (Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami), and Natsir even became a vice-president of this organization.<sup>17</sup>

The Masjumi/Persis worldview survived in yet another incarnation: the post-war radical Islamist movement, Darul Islam (DI). The DI revolt commenced in 1947, led by a charismatic Masjumi Javanese activist called S.M. Kartosuwirjo.<sup>18</sup> Kartosuwirjo violently rejected the secular state vision and religiously neutral *Pancasila* ideology of secular nationalist leaders Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta. Kartosuwirjo proclaimed instead an Islamic State in Indonesia (NII) based on *shariah* law in August 1949, and the DI/NII forces waged *jihād* against the Republican regime throughout the 1950s. By 1962, however the DI revolt that had spread from its West Java epicentre to Aceh in the west and South Sulawesi in the east was crushed and Kartosuwirjo captured and

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<sup>13</sup> Symonds, "Political Origins".

<sup>14</sup> "Rais Wins More Support".

<sup>15</sup> The Jakarta Charter refers to a draft constitutional preamble that stipulates that Muslim Indonesians are obligated to abide by the strictures of the *shariah* law. Martin van Bruinessen, "Indonesia's Ulama and Politics: Caught Between Legitimizing the Status Quo and Searching for Alternatives", *Prisma – The Indonesian Indicator* (Jakarta), No. 49 (1990), pp. 52-69.

<sup>16</sup> "Rais Wins More Support".

<sup>17</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Indonesia's Ulama and Politics".

<sup>18</sup> Greg Fealy, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?", *Southeast Asian Affairs 2004* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), p. 111.

executed. DI thereafter splintered into several factions and went underground.<sup>19</sup> While DI failed to attain its political goal of an Indonesian Islamic State, it nevertheless “inspired subsequent generations of radical Muslims with its commitment to a *shari’a*-based state and its heavy sacrifices in the cause of *jihad*”.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Political Backdrop**

These diverse intersecting, cross-cutting, historical influences - the Islamic modernist strain that sought civilizational revitalization through a fusion between Salafi fundamentalism and the fruits of modernity; the related Persis, Masjumi and DDII movements and violent DI struggle, together constituted the remote but very important milieu from which the pan-Southeast Asian terrorist organization known today as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) emerged. The co-founders of JI, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Bashir, were born in Java in the 1930s and educated in Islamic modernist schools, and by the 1950s were leaders in a Masjumi-linked student organization Gerakan Pemuda Islam Indonesia. They were also strong DI sympathisers and admirers of Kartosuwirjo who shared the vision of setting up a *Daulah Islamiyah* (Islamic State). Following the October 1965 coup that eventually led to the emergence of General Suharto and the New Order regime in Indonesia, Sungkar, who had met and begun collaborating with Bashir in 1963, became chairman of the DDII Central Java Branch, and with the advent of the arch-secularist Suharto, commenced campaigning with Bashir openly for an Islamic state in Indonesia.<sup>21</sup> Amongst other things, they set up a clandestine radio station, *Radio Dakwah Islamiyah Surakarta*, in Solo, Central Java in 1967. *Radio Dakwah* broadcast calls for *jihad* in Central Java and was eventually shut down in 1975. More significantly, Sungkar and Bashir set up the Pondok Pesantren Al-Mukmin Islamic boarding school in 1971 that moved to the village of Ngruki, east of Solo, two years later.<sup>22</sup> Al-Mukmin became a centre of symbolic resistance to the New Order regime. It refused to fly the Indonesian flag or display presidential icons, for example, and when in the 1980s Suharto decreed that *Pancasila* ideology must be the underlying foundational principle for all

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<sup>19</sup> Bilveer Singh, “The Emergence of the Jemaah Islamiyah Threat in Southeast Asia: External Linkages and Influences”, paper presented at a workshop on “International Terrorism in Southeast Asia and Likely Implications for South Asia”, organized by the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, India, 28-29 April 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> Symonds, “Political Origins”.

<sup>22</sup> Bilveer Singh, “Emergence”.



social organizations including Muslim entities, Al-Mukmin's leadership vehemently opposed this.<sup>23</sup>

Sungkar and Bashir did not stop at symbolic resistance only. As a DDII activist Sungkar understood the rationale for *dakwah* and the necessity for Islamizing the individual Muslim as a prelude to Islamizing the wider society. However following the experience of imprisonment by Suharto between 1978 and 1982, both he and Bashir reckoned that rather than unstructured proselytizing, what was needed was more focused propagation of the Islamic faith through a vanguard *jemaah* (religious community). In this Sungkar was inspired by the second Caliph Umar bin Khattab, who had apparently observed: "No Islam without *jemaah*, no *jemaah* without leadership and no leadership without compliance".<sup>24</sup> This imperative to place the *dakwah* process on a more organized, systematic basis was something Sungkar appears to have picked up from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood movement. The whole idea was that the struggle toward the realization of an Islamic State depended on several steps: first moral self-improvement; second, becoming part of a family of like-minded individuals (*usroh*) committed to help and control one another and thus stay on the right path; third, coalescing the various *usroh* to form wider *Jemaah Islamiyah*; and finally coalescing the various *Jemaah* into an Islamic State. Sungkar and Bashir accordingly sought to organize the Al-Mukmin alumni into a linked network of *usroh*.<sup>25</sup>

Martin van Bruinessen regards this *usroh* network as comprising devout young Muslims, "some of them quietist, some of them militants, all of them opposed to the Suharto regime, organised in 'families,' that together were to constitute a true community of committed Muslims, a *Jama'ah Islamiyah*."<sup>26</sup> This *Jemaah Islamiyah* movement of Al-Mukmin alumni and their families, in truth, did not develop in isolation from broader forces in Indonesian society. Sungkar and Bashir, always feeling a certain ideological kinship with the older and wider DI ideological diaspora, had earlier decided to affiliate the early JI *usroh* network with the already existing DI. To this end JI officially became part of the Central Java DI in Solo, in 1976 and both Sungkar and Bashir swore an oath

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<sup>23</sup> Tim Behrend, "Reading Past the Myth: Public Teachings of Abu Bakara Ba'asyir", 19 February 2003, available at <http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/asia/tbehrend/abb-myth.htm> (accessed 30 April 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Blontank Poer, "Tracking the Roots of *Jemaah Islamiyah*", *The Jakarta Post*, 8 March 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Sally Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords: On the Trail of Terrorism From Afghanistan to Australia* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2004), p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, "The Violent Fringes of Indonesia's Radical Islam", [http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/violent\\_fringe.htm](http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/violent_fringe.htm) (accessed 29 Jul 2004).

of allegiance to the DI Central Java leader Haji Ismail Pranoto, better known as Hispran.<sup>27</sup> The term Jemaah Islamiyah itself disappeared from view, not to be resurrected again until the early 1990s. Sungkar and Bashir later introduced to the relatively unstructured DI, with its imprecise notions of what an actual Islamic State ought to be like, some of the ideas they themselves picked up from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>28</sup>

This institutional affiliation with DI and contact with veterans of the DI revolt may have played a part in radicalizing Sungkar and Bashir - in the sense of enabling them to accept at some level the utility of violence in pursuit of the *Daulah Islamiyah*. Hence in February 1977 both men set up the Jemaah Mujahidin Anshorullah (JMA), which some analysts believe to be the precursor organization to the later JI terrorist organization.<sup>29</sup> Sungkar and Bashir also became involved in the activities of a violent underground movement called Komando Jihad. This organization sought to set up an Islamic state in Indonesia and perpetrated the bombings of nightclubs, churches and cinemas. Incidentally, Komando Jihad was to an extent a creation of Indonesian intelligence, whose purpose was to legitimize the New Order's subsequent crackdown on "less radical and non-violent Muslim politicians".<sup>30</sup> As alluded to earlier, in 1978, both Sungkar and Bashir were detained for nine years for their involvement in the Komando Jihad. They were released in 1982, but following the Tanjung Priok incident two years later in which the security forces killed 100 Muslims, both were charged yet again for subversion. This prompted them and several of their followers to decamp to Malaysia in 1985.<sup>31</sup> According to one account they arrived illegally in Malaysia without proper documentation, settled in Kuala Pilah, about 250 kilometres southeast of Kuala Lumpur, and stayed at the home of a Malaysia cleric for about a year. Whilst in Malaysia Bashir adopted the pseudonym Abdus Samad and Sungkar took on the *nom de guerre* Abdul Halim.<sup>32</sup> Over the years, both men, through the financial support base generated by preaching activities, were able to buy property of their own in other parts of the country. Wherever they went they set up Quran reading groups, and were invited to preach in small-group settings in both Malaysia and even in Singapore. In 1992 they set up the Luqmanul Hakiem pesantren in Ulu Tiram, in the southernmost Malaysian State of

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<sup>27</sup> Poer. "Tracking the Roots".

<sup>28</sup> van Bruinessen, "The Violent Fringes of Indonesia's Radical Islam".

<sup>29</sup> Bilveer Singh, "Emergence".

<sup>30</sup> van Bruinessen, "The Violent Fringes of Indonesia's Radical Islam".

<sup>31</sup> Bilveer Singh, "Emergence".

<sup>32</sup> "Abu Bakar Bashir: The Malaysian Connection", *Tempo*, 9 November 2002.

Johore. Luqmanul Hakiem was a clone of Al-Mukmin back in Solo. Bashir later told the Indonesian magazine *Tempo* that in Malaysia he set up “As-Sunnah, a community of Muslims”.<sup>33</sup> In this way the original Sungkar/Bashir network of *usroh* was transnationalized, sinking roots in Indonesia’s neighbours, Malaysia and Singapore. It was also during the Malaysian exile that the mature JI ideology of what we may call Global Salafi Jihad evolved.

### **The Global Jihad Ideological Overlay**

By the time Sungkar and Bashir arrived in Malaysia in 1985, it could be said that they had become committed “radical Islamists”. Some elaboration is in order at this juncture. Islamic fundamentalism (or Salafi Islam) is not a monolithic phenomenon. Salafi Muslims, who take the injunction to emulate the Companions of the Prophet very seriously, may express this piety simply in terms of *personal* adherence to implementing *shariah*-based standards of worship, ritual, dress and overall behavioral standards. The majority of Salafi Muslims, in fact, may be considered more technically as “neo-fundamentalists” who possess “neither a systematic ideology” nor “global political agenda”.<sup>34</sup> Islamism, on the other hand, “turns the traditional religion of Islam into a twentieth-century-style ideology”.<sup>35</sup> In other words, when Salafi Muslims see it as an *added* obligation to actively seek recourse to political power in order to impose their belief system on the society at large, then they become not simply Muslims but rather *Islamists*. Daniel Pipes puts it aptly when he observes that Islamists seek to “build the just society by regimenting people according to a preconceived plan, only this time with an Islamic orientation”.<sup>36</sup> Despite regional variations, Islamists worldwide share the common belief that seeking political power so as to Islamize whole societies, is the only way Islam as a faith can revitalize itself - and recapture the former pre-eminent position it enjoyed vis-a-vis the West. Modern Islamist movements include the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East, the Jama’at-I Islami in the Indian sub-continent as well as the Iranian movements of the 1979 Revolution that brought down the Shah. These Islamists sought to construct “ideological systems” and “models” for “distinctive polities that challenged what they saw to be the alternative systems: nationalism, capitalism and

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<sup>33</sup> “Abu Bakar Bashir: The Malaysian Connection”.

<sup>34</sup> Barbara D. Metcalf, “Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs”. Essay based on Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) Annual Lecture, Leiden University, 23 November 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Pipes, *Militant Islam*, p. 8.

Marxism”.<sup>37</sup> In short, while the average Salafi Muslim emphasizes individual spiritual and moral transformation as the key to Islamic revitalization, the Islamist, as Pipes suggests, seeks *power* as the means to this end.<sup>38</sup>

Now for years both Sungkar and Bashir had been Islamists in the sense that ultimately, they sought the setting up of an Islamic State based on the *shariah* in Indonesia. But what about the use of force in pursuit of this goal? It is possible to discern a latent ambivalence toward the role of violence that existed for years. Both men had been aware of the potential of *dakwah* or proselytization for gradually Islamizing Indonesian society from the bottom up; Sungkar had after all been the chairman of the DDII Central Java branch while Bashir had majored in *dakwah* at the Al-Irsyad Islamic university in Solo.<sup>39</sup> As noted, this belief in *dakwah* had also led them to set up Al-Mukmin in Solo in 1971. At the same time, however, they were not unsympathetic to the Kartosuwirjo argument that Islamizing the polity by force was ultimately the only feasible approach. They even affiliated the nascent JI movement with Hispran’s DI and were involved in the Komando Jihad. It would seem that the period of incarceration from 1978 and subsequent targeting by the New Order regime may have been the “tipping point” in terms of bringing them to the final insight that *dakwah* in the absence of *jihad* would be ineffectual. In other words they became not merely Islamists but *radical* Islamists who believed in *jihad* as the means to actualize an Islamized Indonesia. The Indonesian journalist Blontank Poer observes in this respect that the *jihadi* emphasis in the overall strategy of Sungkar and Bashir became more obvious after the shift to Malaysia in 1985.<sup>40</sup>

By the 1980s, moreover, Islamist ideas from the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent had been translated and were in circulation in Southeast Asia.<sup>41</sup> These mingled and fused with the individual ideas and experiences of Sungkar and Bashir. Thus the injunctions of Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood founder al-Banna and the Pakistani ideologue Maulana Mawdudi to set up a “vanguard” community to serve as the “dynamic nucleus for true Islamic reformation within the broader society”<sup>42</sup> would have been readily embraced by the Indonesian clerics. Sungkar and Bashir moreover would have

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<sup>37</sup> Metcalf, “Traditionalist Islamic Activism”.

<sup>38</sup> Pipes, *Militant Islam*, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Behrend, “Reading Past the Myth”.

<sup>40</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>41</sup> Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford, 2002), p. 53.

had little difficulty accepting the Muslim Brotherhood radical Sayyid Qutb's absolutist, polarized view of the world.<sup>43</sup>

There is only one place on earth which can be called the home of Islam (Dar-ul-Islam), and it is that place where the Islamic state is established and the Shariah is the authority and God's limits are observed and where all Muslims administer the affairs of the state with mutual consultation. The rest of the world is the home of hostility (Dar-ul-Harb).

Finally, by the early 1990s the Sungkar-Bashir ideological framework represented a *radical* Islamist vision because it included the explicit willingness to resort to *jihad* in pursuit of the goal of an Islamized Indonesia. It should be noted that apart from the DI legacy as well as the more recent radicalizing effect of direct New Order repression, Sungkar, Bashir and others in the JI orbit were also likely exposed to the ideas of the Egyptian radical Mohammad al-Faraj, executed by Cairo in 1982 for his role in the assassination of President Anwar Sadat.<sup>44</sup> Faraj, himself influenced by the works of al-Banna, Mawdudi and Qutb, brought their incipient absolutizing ideas to their ultimate conclusion. Unequivocally rejecting the efficacy of *dakwah* as a means of Islamizing *jahili* (unIslamic or immoral) society,<sup>45</sup> Faraj argued that the weakness of Muslim societies was due to the fact that Muslim leaders had hollowed out the vigorous concept of *jihad*, thereby robbing it of its "true meaning".<sup>46</sup> Faraj, in his pamphlet the *Neglected Obligation*, argued that the "Qu'ran and the Hadith were fundamentally about warfare", and that the concept of *jihad*, in contrast to the conventional wisdom, was "meant to be taken literally, not allegorically".<sup>47</sup> He argued that *jihad* represented in fact the "sixth pillar of Islam" and that *jihad* calls for "fighting, which meant confrontation and blood".<sup>48</sup> Faraj held that not just infidels but even Muslims who deviated from the moral and social dictates of *shariah* were legitimate targets for *jihad*. Faraj concluded that peaceful means for fighting apostasy in Muslim societies were bound to fail and

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<sup>43</sup> Qutb Cited in Esposito, *Unholy War*, p. 60.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), p. 80.

<sup>45</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 16.

<sup>46</sup> Esposito, *Unholy War*, p. 62.

<sup>47</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, updated edn. with a new preface (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), p. 81.

<sup>48</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

ultimately the true soldier of Islam was justified in using “virtually any means available to achieve a just goal”.<sup>49</sup> Given their own recent experiences at the hands of the Suharto regime, Sungkar and Bashir would have endorsed, at some deeper level, the ideas of Faraj on the necessity for a literal understanding of *jihad*, as well as his wider argument that *jihad* represented the highest form of devotion to God.<sup>50</sup> This is probably why, in 1984/85, when the Saudis sought volunteers for the *jihad* in Afghanistan against the invading Soviets, Sungkar and Bashir willingly raised groups of volunteers from amongst their following.<sup>51</sup> The Afghan theater was seen as a useful training ground for a future *jihad* in Indonesia itself.<sup>52</sup>

As it turned out, rather than Afghanistan being seen as a training ground for a *jihad* aimed at setting up an Indonesian Islamic state, that conflict became the source of ideas that transformed the original Indonesia-centric vision of Sungkar and Bashir. To be sure, prior to the 1990s, the radical Islamist ideology driving the Jemaah Islamiyah movement may be termed, following Marc Sageman, as “Salafi Jihad”.<sup>53</sup> The aim of the émigré community in Malaysia led by Sungkar and Bashir was ultimately to wage a *jihad* against the Suharto regime - in Faraj’s terms, the so-called “near enemy” - and set up a Salafi Islamic state in Indonesia. However, returning Indonesian and other Southeast Asian veterans of the Afghan *jihad* helped expose Sungkar and Bashir to global *jihadi* perspectives. In Afghanistan, the Southeast Asian *jihadis* had been inspired to think in *global* terms by the teachings of the charismatic Palestinian *alim* (singular for *ulama*) Abdullah Azzam. Azzam, a key mentor of Osama bin Laden, had received a doctorate in Islamic jurisprudence from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, had met the family of Sayyid Qutb and was friendly with Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman. Rahman – better known as the “Blind Sheikh” - was the spiritual guide to Egyptian radical Islamist terrorist organizations such as Islamic Jihad and would later be implicated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York.<sup>54</sup>

When the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, Azzam, who had played a big part in recruiting non-Afghan foreign *mujahidin* worldwide for the anti-Soviet *jihad* in the first place, began to set his sights further. He argued that the struggle to expel the

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<sup>49</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

<sup>50</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Van Bruinessen, “Violent Fringes of Indonesia’s Radical Islam”.

<sup>52</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>53</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), pp. 76-78.

Soviets from Afghanistan was in fact “the prelude to the liberation of Palestine” and other “lost” territories.<sup>55</sup> However, Azzam, unlike Faraj, did not sanction *jihad* against “apostate” Muslim governments in Egypt, Jordan and Syria. His understanding of *jihad* was a traditional one in the sense of evicting infidel occupiers from Muslim lands. However, after his death in a car bomb explosion in Peshawar in November 1989, the Afghan Arab *mujahidin* community, and Osama bin Laden in particular, again accepted the Faraj argument that targeting Muslim governments seen as apostate was perfectly legitimate.<sup>56</sup> Subsequently, at the beginning of the 1990s, once American troops arrived in Saudi Arabia and in Somalia, both Muslim territories, “a more global analysis of Islam’s problems” occurred and local Muslim leaders were seen as “pawns of a global power”. This in effect reversed Faraj’s strategy and now the priority was *jihad* against the “far enemy” over the “near enemy”.<sup>57</sup>

Sungkar and Bashir were not insulated from these post-Afghanistan shifts in global radical Salafi ideology. In addition to their discussions with returning Indonesian veterans of the Afghan war, both men also met with international *jihadi* groups in Malaysia. Consequently, by 1994, Sungkar and Bashir were no longer talking about establishing merely an Islamic state in Indonesia. Over and above this, they were now talking of establishing a “*khilafah* (world Islamic state)”.<sup>58</sup> In this conception, a “world caliphate uniting all Muslim nations under a single, righteous exemplar and ruler”, is the ultimate goal.<sup>59</sup> No coincidence then that at about that time Sungkar and Bashir reportedly made contact with Egyptian radicals associated with the Blind Sheikh.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, in the early 1990s Sungkar and Bashir disassociated themselves from the Central Java DI movement because of serious doctrinal differences with regional DI leader Ajengan Masduki, who had apparently embraced Sufi teachings on nonviolence and tolerance. Sungkar and Bashir, casting off the overarching DI appellation, resurrected the name Jemaah Islamiyah.<sup>61</sup> This *Ji organization* - as opposed to the older, wider, *usroh movement* - infused with the post-Afghanistan neo-Faraj ethos of Global Salafi Jihad, vowed to wreak “vengeance against perceived Western brutality and

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<sup>55</sup> Azzam cited in Malise Ruthven, *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America* (London and New York: Granta, 2002), p. 203.

<sup>56</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 18.

<sup>57</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*.

<sup>58</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>59</sup> Behrend, “Reading Past the Myth”.

<sup>60</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

<sup>61</sup> Poer, “Tracking the Roots”.

exploitation of Muslim communities”.<sup>62</sup> This is the JI whose current spiritual leader, Bashir - Sungkar passed away in 1999 - declared publicly that he supported “Osama bin Laden’s struggle because his is the true struggle to uphold Islam, not terror – the terrorists are America and Israel”.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Socio-Cultural Context**

Into this complex mix of history, politics and ideology we must also add the socio-cultural element. Olufemi A. Lawal identifies a few dimensions of culture that can be used to analyze different societies, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance and individualism/collectivism.<sup>64</sup> Lawal notes that in high power distance societies, “peoples accept as natural the fact that power and rewards are inequitably distributed in society”.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, in collectivist societies, individuals are expected to be loyal to the group and subordinate personal goals to those of the collective. In an age of globalization and the erosion of traditional social structures and processes, moreover, certain societies may feel particularly “threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity”.<sup>66</sup> Following Lawal, it may be suggested that individuals in high power-distance, ambiguity-intolerant and collectivist communities would be “collectively” programmed for induction into religiously fundamentalist constituencies. This is because such individuals, as Lawal suggests, would relatively readily accept that all authority and “power has been naturally concentrated in the hands of a leader”.<sup>67</sup> Being ambiguity-intolerant, moreover, they would desire deeply, at some subconscious level, to accept that leader’s clear and unambiguous interpretations of wider social and political developments. Finally, being cultural collectivists, they would tend to deem it their individual duty and proof of loyalty to the group to execute the leader’s instructions.<sup>68</sup>

Lawal notes in his essay that “non-Western and developing societies” tend to display high power distance and collectivist orientations.<sup>69</sup> Certainly elements of Lawal’s analysis appear to hold in the case of Southeast Asia. Barry Desker has pointed

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<sup>62</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, p. 112.

<sup>63</sup> Bilveer Singh, “Emergence”.

<sup>64</sup> Olufemi A. Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations in the Emergence and Growth of Terrorism”, in *The Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 4: Programs and Practices in Response and Prevention*, ed. by Chris E. Stout (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), pp. 26-27.

<sup>65</sup> Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 4, p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 4, p. 27.

<sup>67</sup> Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 4, p. 27.

<sup>68</sup> Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 4, p. 27.

<sup>69</sup> Lawal, “Social-Psychological Considerations”, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 4, pp. 29-30.



out the revered status of Hadrami Arab migrants in Southeast Asia, who were regarded as “descendants of the Prophet” and “whose command of Arabic was perceived as giving them an insight into the religious texts”.<sup>70</sup> These Hadrami Arab migrants helped to introduce early Wahhabi elements into Southeast Asian Islam.<sup>71</sup> It should be noted in this respect that the families of both Sungkar and Bashir have Yemeni roots.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the most recent two decades or so of Islamic revival have resulted in the further Islamization of state and identity along Middle Eastern lines. Hence Patricia Martinez observes that amongst many ordinary Southeast Asian Muslims today, a “core-periphery dynamic” exists, resulting in the tendency to privilege the Middle Eastern-trained and/or Arabic-speaking local *alim*:

The core periphery dynamic, with the heartland of Islam as core and Southeast Asian Muslims as periphery, gives rise to an infantile religiosity among many ordinary Southeast Asian Muslims [who cannot] read the huge corpus of theology, philosophy, exegesis and jurisprudence that is the rich heritage of a Muslim [but] most of which is in Arabic.<sup>73</sup>

Martinez points out that as a result, many Southeast Asian Muslims “rely on the mediators of Islam – those who are *ulama* – to interpret and guide”.<sup>74</sup>

The power distance hypothesis is certainly relevant in the hierarchically ordered Javanese cultural context. Many traditional pesantren – independent Islamic boarding schools - which are found in rural Java and in some cities, are usually run as the “social and intellectual fiefdoms of charismatic *syekh*”, that is, “pilgrims who have returned to Java after an extended period of study in Mecca or Medinah”. Tim Behrend observes that such “*syekh*” enjoy high status in Indonesian society. Indeed, they play a critical personal role in “constructing the religious psyche” of pesantren students. Such pesantren alumni form extensive social networks long after graduation and even play significant roles in the polity and society later.<sup>75</sup> In fact, as noted, the remote socio-

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<sup>70</sup> Desker, “Countering Terrorism”.

<sup>71</sup> Desker, “Countering Terrorism”.

<sup>72</sup> “Militant Islam in Indonesia”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 2003.

<sup>73</sup> Patricia A. Martinez, “Deconstructing Jihad: Southeast Asian Contexts”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>74</sup> Martinez, “Deconstructing Jihad”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 74.

<sup>75</sup> Tim Behrend, “Meeting Abubakar Ba’asyir”, 23 December 2002, available at <http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/asia/tbehrend/meet-abb.htm> (accessed 2003).

cultural roots of the terrorist network JI itself can be traced back to the historical, interlocking Persis/Masjumi/DDII/DI *communities of concern*, whose central ideological hub would comprise key Islamist figures in Indonesian history, such as Mohammad Natsir and Kartosuwirjo. Furthermore while after 1960 the Persis-dominated Masjumi was never reconstituted as a political party, “its constituency has remained a recognizable entity, held together by a dense network of relationships, friendship, intermarriage, education, and all sorts of institutions”.<sup>76</sup> As an illustration of the socio-cultural embeddedness of today’s JI, the family of convicted Bali bomber Imam Samudra, is associated with Persis.<sup>77</sup>

In like vein, Darul Islam ideas and attachments continue to circulate within communities of concern in West Java and South Sulawesi. Greg Fealy argues that such “former DI areas have proven a rich source of new members for the JI and are likely to remain so in the future”.<sup>78</sup> A recent report, moreover, echoes Fealy, pointing out that JI has begun replenishing its ranks from communities in “West Java, Sumatra and eastern Indonesia, especially in Sulawesi”. As a top Indonesian counter-terrorism official put it, these are “areas where radical Islamic elements have historically had a strong foothold”.<sup>79</sup> In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that former JI operational leader Hambali grew up in Cianjur in West Java, an area that had historically been a Darul Islam stronghold.<sup>80</sup> In addition, Imam Samudra, who studied and later taught at the Al-Mukmin offshoot Luqmanul Hakiem pesantren in Malaysia – grew up in Serang, West Java, weaned on stories of the heroic exploits of DI leader Kartosuwiryo.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, Mukhlas, senior JI leader and Al-Mukmin alumnus, who grew up in Tengkulun in East Java, was inspired to be a mujahidin by stories of his family’s exploits during the Indonesian struggle against the Dutch in the late 1940s.<sup>82</sup> The idea of historic communities of concern, characterized by a history of radicalism and in particular a socio-cultural “myth-symbol complex”<sup>83</sup> glorifying past struggles against secular Christian forces, is important to our analysis.

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<sup>76</sup> “Rais wins more support”.

<sup>77</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, p. 81.

<sup>78</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism”, pp. 111-112.

<sup>79</sup> Derwin Pereira, “JI Cells ‘Still as Deadly’”, *Straits Times* (Singapore), 1 April 2005.

<sup>80</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>81</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup> Murray Edelman defines a myth as a “belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning”. He defines a symbol as an “emotionally charged shorthand reference to

It is possible, analytically speaking, moreover, to move from wider historic *communities of concern* to more narrowly defined *constituencies* directly linked to the JI spiritual leadership hub of Bashir and Sungkar. In this connection, since 1971, more than 3000 alumni have passed through the Al-Mukmin pesantren in Solo.<sup>84</sup> These and their immediate families, along with the students, teachers and alumni of spin-off JI “Ivy League” pesantren such as Al-Islam in East Java, Al-Muttaqien and Dar us-Syahadah in Central Java and the Luqmanul Hakiem in Ulu Tiram, Malaysia, have formed what we may call networked *constituencies of hate*.<sup>85</sup> In fact a recent study has discovered that more than a hundred marriages involving JI leaders and members exist, integrating families and constituencies in Malaysia, Indonesia and the southern Philippines.<sup>86</sup>

### Inside the Constituency of Hate

To be sure, when one talks about the Al-Mukmin diaspora as a “constituency of hate”, caution is in order. After all, many Al-Mukmin graduates have “entered society as government workers, doctors, lawyers, soldiers, even journalists”.<sup>87</sup> In any case, even amongst Al-Mukmin alumni there are genuine differences over the relative merits of *dakwah* and *jihad*. We observed earlier that some Al-Mukmin alumni are “quietists” while others are “militants”. Greg Fealy similarly points out that “[n]ot all JI members are engaged in terrorism, and the network also has groups conducting peaceful religious education and welfare functions”.<sup>88</sup> The International Crisis Group takes pains to assert that to “have gone to a JI-linked pesantren does not make one a terrorist”.<sup>89</sup> All these views miss the point, however. The issue is not whether an Islamist constituency believes it can actualise its political vision by violence. The issue is whether that

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a myth”. See Edelman’s work cited in Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Behrend, “Meeting Abubakar Ba’asyir”; Richard C. Paddock, “Terror Network’s Academic Outposts”, *Los Angeles Times*, 1 April 2003.

<sup>85</sup> *Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous* (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 63, 26 August 2003), p. 26. My own conceptualization of “historic communities of concern” and smaller “constituencies of hate” associated with the Al-Mukmin pesantren network is inspired in part by Willard Gaylin’s differentiation between a wider “culture of hatred” and a smaller “culture of haters”. See Willard Gaylin, *Hatred: The Psychological Descent into Violence* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), pp. 195-196.

<sup>86</sup> Wong Chun Wai and Lourdes Charles, “More than 100 Marriages Involve Key JI Members”, *The Star Online* (Malaysia), 7 Sep. 2004, available at <http://thestar.com.my/news/archives/story.asp?ppath=%5C2004%5C9%5C> (accessed 11 Sep. 2004).

<sup>87</sup> Tracy Dahlby, *Allah’s Torch: A Report from Behind the Scenes in Asia’s War on Terror* (New York: William Morrow, 2005), p. 232.

<sup>88</sup> Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism” p. 113.

<sup>89</sup> *Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged But Still Dangerous*, p. 26.

constituency is Islamist in the first place. It has been said that Bashir does not himself publicly advocate violence against the Indonesian state. In this respect, through his Muslim Mujahidin Council (MMI), formed in August 2000, Bashir and other Islamists have sought to agitate for an Islamic State through ostensibly peaceful *dakwah*. Nevertheless, it is not the means that is at issue but the *ultimate vision* that is. Bashir's worldview is sharply polarized: Christians would have to accept the status of a minority *dhimmi* community with protected but restricted rights in an Indonesian Islamic State.<sup>90</sup> Muslims would tolerate but not embrace Christians, and would "not seek to mingle with them".<sup>91</sup> In the final analysis, Bashir's message is "not simply anti-Zionist or anti-Israeli, but very deeply and personally anti-Jewish".<sup>92</sup>

In short, the real problem is a *state of mind*, or a *worldview*. John E. Mack defines a worldview as "an organizing principle or philosophy, a fixed way of thinking or habit of mind". Mack holds that worldviews are similar to ideologies, but "broader in scope", and are a sort of "mental template into which we try to fit events".<sup>93</sup> Bashir's worldview in this respect is of immense interest. In an echo of Qutb's remarks cited earlier, he once declared during a sermon at an open-air mosque:<sup>94</sup>

God has divided humanity into two parts, namely the followers of God and those who follow Satan...God's group are those who follow Islam, those who are prepared to follow his laws and struggle for the implementation of sharia [Islamic] law...Meanwhile what is meant by Satan's group are those people who oppose God's law, who ...throw obstacles in the path of the implementation of God's law.

Bashir made it very clear that there was no hope of conciliation between true Muslims who believed in the complete implementation of Islamic law and those that opposed this:<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For a discussion of "*dhimmitude*", see Robert Spencer, *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Behrend, "Reading Past the Myth".

<sup>92</sup> Behrend, "Meeting Abubakar Ba'asyir".

<sup>93</sup> John E. Mack, "Looking Beyond Terrorism: Transcending the Mind of Enmity", in *The Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 1: A Public Understanding*, ed. by Chris E. Stout (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), p. 176.

<sup>94</sup> Cited in Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Cited in Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, p. 2.

We would rather die than follow that which you worship. We reject all of your beliefs, we reject all of your ideologies, we reject all of your teachings on social issues, economics or beliefs.  
*Between you and us there will forever be a ravine of hate and we will be enemies until you follow God's law.* (emphasis mine)

Is this binary, hate-filled worldview sharply dividing humanity into two irreconcilable camps a problem? Some would demur. For instance, a publisher of textbooks for use in Islamic schools in New York, filled with anti-Semitic and anti-Christian passages, argued that young Muslims must “learn and appreciate there are differences between what they have and what other religions teach”, and that they need to be conscious of their “own tradition”.<sup>96</sup> Moreover social psychologists do concede that “ethnocentrism and stereotyping” are normal ways by which people process information about the environment. “The human mind”, they say, “groups people, as well as objects, into categories” that enable individuals to “simplify the present and predict the future more effectively”.<sup>97</sup> However, it is also “a small step from categorization” to “stereotyping and favoritism for one's group”. This in-group bias exists because individuals define themselves partly by their group membership. Membership of a high-prestige group meets basic psychological needs such as “belongingness, distinctiveness” and “respect”.<sup>98</sup> This is especially true for individuals with deep “affiliative needs” and an “as-yet incomplete sense of individual identity” that generate an intense need to belong. This impels them to “submerge their own identities into the group”, so that a kind of “group mind” emerges.<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, “taken to extremes”, simplistic stereotyping of outsiders, fostered by the establishment of a “group mind” by key ideological elites at the locus of a constituency of hate, can foster dangerous prejudice.<sup>100</sup> What is more, the raw emotive

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<sup>96</sup> Larry Cohler-Esses, “Sowing Seeds of Hatred”, *New York Daily News*, 30 March 2003.

<sup>97</sup> Neil J. Kressel, *Mass Hate: The Global Rise of Genocide and Terror*, rev. and updated (New York: Westview, 2002), p. 211.

<sup>98</sup> Michael J. Stevens, “The Unanticipated Consequences of Globalization: Contextualizing Terrorism”, in *The Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 3: Theoretical Understandings and Perspectives*, ed. by Chris E. Stout (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), p. 44.

<sup>99</sup> Jerrold M. Post, “Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces”, in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. by Walter Reich (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), p. 33.

<sup>100</sup> Kressel, *Mass Hate*, p. 211.

power of religion can be exploited to legitimize the group mind and reinforce this prejudice against outsiders. Paul N. Anderson's pithy comments shed very useful light on the implications of Bashir's worldview cited earlier:<sup>101</sup>

An important aspect of religious power is that it creates an "us". It solidifies group identity and appeals to religious certainty, eternal consequences, and principled loyalties. [But] Yahweh's warfare against tribal adversaries in Hebrew Scripture, the dehumanization of infidels in the Qur'an, and the temporal and eternal warnings against the unfaithful in Christian Scripture function to create an us-versus-them mentality common to prejudice and violence. In that sense, the organizing power of religion to create intra-group solidarity becomes a devastating contributor to inter-group opposition.

This capacity of religious faith to reinforce a "moral-and-virtuous-us versus an "immoral- and-evil-them" binary worldview fits hand in glove with the powerful social psychological process known as the Ultimate (or Fundamental) Attribution Error. This, according to Stephen D. Fabick, leads to an "overemphasis on personality as the explanation for [religious] ingroup members' virtuous behavior and an overemphasis on context as the explanation for reprehensible behavior by someone in the in-group". Conversely, the "opposite attribution emphases are true" in explaining the behavior of members of the religious outgroup.<sup>102</sup> To put it simply, when our religious group kills, it's because we are defending ourselves and have no choice [situational explanation], but when they kill, it's because they are inherently evil [dispositional explanation].

It can be argued, therefore, that the binary worldview articulated by Bashir and imbibed by his followers clearly remains a source of concern, even if many members of the constituencies of hate spawned by Sungkar and Bashir do not necessarily "support violence in the name of Islam".<sup>103</sup> In other words, American journalist Tracy Dahlby's

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<sup>101</sup> Paul N. Anderson, "Religion and Violence: From Pawn to Scapegoat", in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Vol. 2: Religion, Psychology and Violence*, ed. by J. Harold Ellens (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), pp. 270-271.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen D. Fabick, "Us and Them: Reducing the Risk of Terrorism", in *The Psychology of Terrorism, Vol. 2: Clinical Aspects and Responses*, ed. by Chris ER. Stout (London and Westport: Praeger, 2002), p. 233.

<sup>103</sup> Noor Huda Ismail, "Ngruki: It is a School for Islam or Terrorism?", Part 2, *Jakarta Post*, 15 March 2005.

interlocutor's quip, during a visit to Bashir's Al-Mukmin pesantren, that "the people here are radicals in their heads but not in action", is naïve at best, and disingenuous at worst.<sup>104</sup> The problem is that even the seemingly "harmless", relatively inchoate out-group prejudice of a wider historic community of concern can – under certain conditions – be focused into something far worse. While most members of say, a Darul Islam stronghold in West Java may simply be "indifferent" to Christian Indonesians,<sup>105</sup> there would always be a smaller number, the *bigots*, who would be "strongly partial" to their own understanding of Islam, and *actively* "intolerant of those who differ".<sup>106</sup> The bigot would "support legislation and social conditions that deprive the minority of its autonomy and its right to be respected".<sup>107</sup> In other words the bigot would not accept difference. He would want social and moral synchronization with his own beliefs and values. In this respect, it is telling that Hambali's old district of Cianjur in West Java, in 2001 elected a local leader who promised to implement measures such as banning gambling and obliging female students to wear the veil to school.<sup>108</sup>

Finally, it is from amongst the assembly of bigots that the *haters* emerge. While a "bigot may feel malevolence whenever he thinks of the despised group", he "is not obsessively preoccupied with them".<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, hatred "requires both passion and a preoccupation with the hated group".<sup>110</sup> There could be "significant slippage" between the bigots and the haters.<sup>111</sup> The boundary between the bigot and the hater would correspond in our analysis with the rough dividing line between wider historic communities of concern and the smaller constituencies of hate intimately associated with the Sungkar-Bashir ideological axis. Should we be worried only about the narrow constituencies of haters and not the wider communities of prejudice and bigotry, which spawn them? Psychoanalyst Willard Gaylin thinks not:

Prejudice and bigotry also facilitate the agendas of a hating population. They take advantage of the passivity of the larger

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<sup>104</sup> Dahlby, *Allah's Torch*, p. 232.

<sup>105</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 24.

<sup>106</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 26.

<sup>107</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*.

<sup>108</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, p. 39.

<sup>109</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 28.

<sup>110</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*.

<sup>111</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, pp. 26-27.

community of bigots, a passivity that is essential for that minority who truly hate to carry out their malicious destruction.<sup>112</sup>

This assessment is validated by the reality that leading JI bomb-maker, Malaysian Azahari Husin, who has been on the run in Indonesia, has, at the time of writing, been able to elude capture thanks to the help of pockets of sympathetic supporters. In sum the preceding analysis of the relationship between prejudice, bigotry and hatred is not unimportant. Bashir once told an Indonesian intelligence official that as a preacher he likened himself to a “craftsman” who sells “knives”, but is not responsible for what happens to them.<sup>113</sup> As the foregoing discussion suggests, however, Bashir’s remarks are disingenuous, as *words do matter*. Gaylin elucidates:

As recently as the summer of 2002 the *New York Times* reported an interview in which a professor of Islamic law explained to a visiting reporter: “Well of course I hate you because you are Christian, but that doesn’t mean I want to kill you.” Well, the professor may not wish to kill the reporter, but the students he instills with his theological justifications of hatred may have different ideas about the proper expressions of hatred.

In short it is with the “culture of hatred” that “monstrous evil can be unleashed”. When “everyday bias”, nurtured within the constituencies of hate nurtured by inveterate haters such as Sungkar and Bashir, is “supported and legitimated by religion”, the “passions of ordinary malcontents” can be “intensified and focused”.<sup>114</sup> In a nutshell, Sungkar and Bashir, driven by a virulent, religiously legitimated binary worldview, have helped shaped constituencies of hate within Indonesia and Southeast Asia. It now behooves us to uncover how what we may call *radicalized ideological spaces*, the loci of these constituencies of hate, enable relatively amorphous bigotry and hatred to be “intensified and focused”, paving the way for the onset of radicalism and possibly even terrorism.

### **Radicalized Ideological Spaces: Ground Zero of the Constituency of Hate**

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<sup>112</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 27.

<sup>113</sup> Anthony Paul, “Enduring the Other’s Other”, *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 4 Dec. 2003.

<sup>114</sup> Gaylin, *Hatred*, p. 244.



One common form of radicalized ideological space is the religious boarding school.<sup>115</sup> In Indonesia today there are two main forms of Islamic religious schools. The *madrassa* is an Islamic day school while the *pesantren* is a boarding school. Indonesian *madrassas* provide primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. The majority of *madrassas* are privately run, while others are regulated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. Whether private or state-run, all *madrassas*, under the Educational Law of 1989, are required to teach the national curriculum devised by the Ministries of Education and Religious Affairs.<sup>116</sup> This curriculum consists of 70 percent general subjects and 30 percent religious subjects.<sup>117</sup> While state *madrassas* and private *madrassas* run by progressive Islamic teachers adhere to the liberal educational thrust of the national curriculum, some private *madrassas* do teach a more “radical educational agenda”.<sup>118</sup> In 2001 there were more than 5.5 million primary, lower and upper secondary students enrolled in more than 35 000 private and state-run *madrassas*.<sup>119</sup> *Madrassas* are less expensive than public secondary schools and provide basic education in rural and lower-income urban areas.<sup>120</sup> *Pesantrens*, on the other hand, teach at secondary level only and function outside the state *madrassa* and public school system. In 2001 it was estimated that 2.7 million students were enrolled in 11 312 *pesantrens*.<sup>121</sup> Dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the arrival of Islamic modernist currents from Cairo, the typical Indonesian *pesantren* exists “as a community with a compound, mosque and boarding system where students and teachers eat, sleep, learn and generally interact throughout the day”.<sup>122</sup> As we shall see, the generally cloistered *pesantren* environment is pregnant with significance.

Pondok *Pesantren Al-Mukmin* is a good example of a religious boarding school that also happens to be a radicalized ideological space. From the outset it sought to combine the best aspects of two well-known *pesantrens*, the modernist Gontor (where Bashir has studied) with its excellent Arabic training, and the Persis *pesantren* in Bangil, which remains noted for its teaching of *shariah*.<sup>123</sup> *Al-Mukmin* usually draws students

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<sup>115</sup> It should be noted that radicalized ideological spaces could also be relatively isolated private homes, mosques and other sites where intense, close contact between teacher and students can be facilitated.

<sup>116</sup> Azra, “Bali and Southeast Asian Islam”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 42.

<sup>117</sup> Van Bruinessen, “‘Traditionalist’ and ‘Islamist’ *pesantren* in contemporary Indonesia”.

<sup>118</sup> Mochtar Buchori, “RI’s ‘Madrasah’ Producing Techno-Illiterates”, *Yaleglobal Online*, 3 July 2002.

<sup>119</sup> Usmar Anza, “Islamic Education: A Brief History of *Madrassas* with Comments on Curricula and Current Pedagogical Practices”, unpublished paper, March 2003, p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> Anza, “Islamic Education”.

<sup>121</sup> Anza, “Islamic Education”.

<sup>122</sup> Anza, “Islamic Education”.

<sup>123</sup> Van Bruinessen, “Traditionalist’ and ‘Islamist’ *Pesantren* in Contemporary Indonesia.”

from 12-18 years of age, from West Java, Sumatra, Lombok, Central Java, West Irian, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Singapore, Malaysia and even Australia.<sup>124</sup> In terms of numbers, Al-Mukmin enrolls at any time about 2000 students, including 800 girls.<sup>125</sup> The curriculum emphasizes both secular and religious subjects. Secular subjects include mathematics, physics, English, business skills and computers. Religious subjects taught include *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Arabic and *aqidah*, or faith. Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia and English are spoken in Al-Mukmin, but most students speak Arabic. The school day is a long one, lasting from 0300 hours to 2200 hours. During this time, students pray, read the Quran, attend classes and take part in sports or physical activity such as martial arts, soccer, badminton, mountaineering and even long marches.<sup>126</sup> If at this juncture one wonders that all this sounds like a description of a regular Indonesian pesantren, it is understandable. It may well be asked: in what way does education at Al-Mukmin foster hate?

The answer is that hate is cultivated not so much through didactic means via the formal curriculum but rather through the semi-formal, “general culture” of the institution.<sup>127</sup> According to Al-Mukmin alumni, the stay-in, boarding school nature of the pesantren expedites virtual “24-hour monitoring” of students by teachers and senior students in all spheres of activity: lessons, language, sports, cleaning etc. This close contact ensures that the “emotional bond between teachers and students is very strong”.<sup>128</sup> For instance, journalist Noor Huda Ismail, who attended Al-Mukmin from 1984 to 1990, between the ages 12 to 17, used to share a “dingy student dormitory together with 20 other students and a volunteer resident assistant named Fadlullah Hasan” who was three years his senior and had “a perpetual blue bruise on his forehead from bowing his head to the floor as the result of his five prayers per day”. After daily morning prayers at the adjacent mosque, Hasan would lead the boys in reading the Quran and urge them to “study and proselytize Islam”. Hasan and Noor eventually developed a “tight bond”.<sup>129</sup> Noor later recounted how such close personal ties between teachers, senior and younger students helped intensify and focus incipient extremist worldviews that some students may already have had. For example, Quran reading classes were

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<sup>124</sup> Pondok Pesantren Al-Mukmin presentation by Noor Huda Ismail, IDSS, 8 April 2005.

<sup>125</sup> Dahlby, *Allah's Torch*, p. 230.

<sup>126</sup> Noor Huda Ismail, Talk on Pondok Pesantren Al-Mukmin at Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 8 April 2005.

<sup>127</sup> The phrase is Martin van Bruinessen's. See Van Bruinessen, “Traditionalist’ and ‘Islamist’ Pesantren in Contemporary Indonesia.”

<sup>128</sup> NH Ismail IDSS Talk.

<sup>129</sup> Noor Huda Ismail, “Ngruki: It is a Terrorism School?”, Part 1, *Jakarta Post*, 15 March 2005.

conducted in groups of 20 students of 12-13 years in age, who were taught the “correct” interpretation of passages by a senior student, usually 16 years old himself, who had himself been taught in the same way.<sup>130</sup> In addition, Al-Mukmin organized frequent public-speaking sessions on Thursday nights, and the “most popular topic” was “the threats facing Islam”, such as “Global Jewish power and Indonesia’s Christian-controlled economy”,<sup>131</sup> as well as “jihad”.<sup>132</sup>

Other ways in which Al-Mukmin students were drilled into the Wahhabi/Global Salafi Jihadi “Storyline” of an Islam under siege were through *halaqah* or small-group discussions involving students and a teacher; as well as one-way lectures or *tausiyah* conducted by *ustaz* (teachers). In addition, students themselves were required to engage in *dakwah* exercises of their own, going out of Al-Mukmin to speak within nearby Islamic circles. Ismail also recounted how for instance, during *halaqah* sessions, the *ustaz* would ask students what they intended to do on graduation, and when the latter replied that they may go into business, the *ustaz* would subtly plant the idea that perhaps participating in *jihad* to defend their oppressed Muslim brethren would be a better option. Other subtle indoctrination measures were used as well: during arduous 6-day marches from Solo to Surabaya, and martial arts training, the students would be urged by teachers to “be strong”, and overcome fear and weakness, as Islam needed to be defended by its enemies.<sup>133</sup> Additional insidious elements discreetly programmed into the ambient environment of Al-Mukmin also helped “intensify and focus” anti-Jewish and anti-Christian sentiments, and the need for *jihad* against these enemies of Islam. These included in-house martial Arabic songs about *jihad* such as “Nasyid”,<sup>134</sup> as well as posters and signs proclaiming messages like “Jihad, Why Not?” and “No Prestige without Jihad” pasted ubiquitously “on walls, lockers and walkways leading to classrooms”.<sup>135</sup> Other graffiti scrawled around Al-Mukmin and spotted by visiting journalists evinced the depth of pure hate being bred within the school. These included messages such as “Bush and Sharon, if you like dead, come to here” and less elegantly, “Bush is f\*cked”.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> NH Ismail IDSS Talk.

<sup>131</sup> NH Ismail, “Ngruki”, Part 1.

<sup>132</sup> NH Ismail IDSS Talk.

<sup>133</sup> NH Ismail IDSS Talk.

<sup>134</sup> NH Ismail, “Ngruki”, Part 1.

<sup>135</sup> Zalman Mohamed Yusof and Mohammad Ishak, “Inside a JI School”, *The New Paper on Sunday* (Singapore), 4 January 2004.

<sup>136</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, p. 6.

Visiting journalist Tracy Dahlby inadvertently shed additional light on the highly xenophobic culture of the pesantren simply by glancing at students' *sandals*.<sup>137</sup>

When we reached the front steps of the school and I bent down to remove my shoes as custom required, I couldn't help but notice that the dozens or so pairs of cheap plastic sandals scattered around the base of the stairs all had interesting little pictures or symbols of some kind etched in ballpoint pen on their insteps. When I took a closer look, however, my heart gave a thump – the little symbols were in fact crude renditions of the Holy Cross and the Star of David.

**Dahlby's guide explained: "So students can always step on them".**<sup>138</sup>

The well-known scholar of Comparative Religion Charles Kimball has noted that problems arise within a religious constituency when "charismatic leadership" and an "unwavering commitment to compelling ideas and teachings", intersect with the "impulse to withdraw from society".<sup>139</sup> In like vein Jonathan Drummond argues that physical withdrawal enables religious leaders to promote "alternative news sources" and "closed religious/ritual systems" to "pull one away from competing social networks and constructions of reality".<sup>140</sup> Certainly, Al-Mukmin's management sought to insulate the flock from the external environment. Noor observed that students were required to obey their teachers at all times and were not permitted direct personal contact with the outside world. Television, radio, magazines and the Internet were all off-limits, as they were seen as vehicles of Westernization. In like vein, smoking, alcohol, jeans, baseball caps and contact with females were all prohibited. Infractions of these rules would result in the offending student having his hair shaven and having to express regret for his act publicly.<sup>141</sup> Singaporean journalists corroborated Noor's comments, as they discovered that Al-Mukmin students were warned not to talk to strangers and were punished if they did.<sup>142</sup> In addition, in line with Drummond's argument, following the August 2003 J.W.

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<sup>137</sup> Dahlby, *Allah's Torch*, p. 229.

<sup>138</sup> Dahlby, *Allah's Torch*.

<sup>139</sup> Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 74.

<sup>140</sup> Jonathan T. Drummond, "From the Northwest Imperative to Global Jihad: Social Psychological Aspects of the Construction of the Enemy, Political Violence and Terror, in Stout, ed., *Psychology of Terrorism*, Vol. 1, p. 76.

<sup>141</sup> NH Ismail IDSS Talk.

<sup>142</sup> Yusof and Ishak, "Inside a JI School".

Marriott II attack in Jakarta, a pamphlet entitled “Marriott Conspiracy Theory”, that blamed “Israeli and US intelligence agents” for the incident, was circulating amongst the Al-Mukmin fraternity.<sup>143</sup> Al-Mukmin, in sum, was seeking to foster an alternate, militant conception of reality built upon the rigid, binary worldview articulated by Bashir.

While Al-Mukmin has been the most important radicalized ideological space within the Sungkar/Bashir constituency of hate, it is not the only one. Another Al-Mukmin offshoot, the Al-Islam pesantren in Tenggulun village, East Java, clearly did not fit into the mainstream Javanese Islam of Tenggulun and was shunned by local villagers. Its students were reportedly suspicious of foreigners and a sign “Only for Muslim People”, betraying the bigotry animating the institution, greeted visitors to the school.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, the “teachers, students and supporters” who lived within another Al-Mukmin offshoot, the Luqmanul Hakiem pesantren in Ulu Tiram, Malaysia, were regarded by locals as “fanatics” who “lived and prayed apart” and “never mixed with other villagers”.<sup>145</sup>

### **The Final Step in the Radicalization Process: Disengaging the Social Sanctions Against Killing**

A virulent binary worldview inculcated through immersion within radicalized ideological spaces, while a necessary condition, is not enough to explain the descent into Islamist terrorism. A final step is required: accepted social mores against killing must also be deliberately disengaged by terrorist elites. Social psychologist Albert Bandura points out in this regard that humans in all societies are socialized into accepting socially mandated “self sanctions” that regulate their behavior. He underscores that “to slaughter in cold blood innocent women and children in buses, department stores, and in airports”, requires “moral disengagement” of these self-sanctions.<sup>146</sup> According to Bandura, one mechanism for disengaging the moral self-sanctions against killing is what he calls “euphemistic labelling”, which “provides a convenient device for masking reprehensible activities or even conferring a respectable status on them”.<sup>147</sup> For convicted Bali bomber Imam Samudra, the attack against the Sari Club and Paddy’s Bar on 12 October 2002 was not mass murder but rather *jihad* against the “US Army of the Cross and its allies” who

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<sup>143</sup> Timothy Mapes, “Indonesian School Gives High Marks to Students Embracing Intolerance”, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 2 September 2003.

<sup>144</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>145</sup> Neighbour, *In the Shadow of Swords*, p. 60.

<sup>146</sup> Albert Bandura, “Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 163.

<sup>147</sup> Bandura, “Mechanisms”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, pp. 169-170.

he felt were oppressing and murdering thousands of Muslim men, women and children worldwide.<sup>148</sup> JI terrorist leaders also employed atrocity propaganda involving Muslim-Christian fighting in Ambon in the Maluku archipelago in eastern Indonesia. These were shown during informal teaching sessions to explain why “*jihad*” in defence of the Muslim brethren in Ambon was obligatory, and the “eager young men in attendance, duly incensed by what they had witnessed, were then briefed on how they could join the *jihad*”.<sup>149</sup>

A second moral disengagement technique Bandura isolates is displacement of responsibility. He argues that “people behave in injurious ways they normally repudiate if a legitimate authority accepts responsibility for the consequences of their conduct”.<sup>150</sup> In this respect, several Malaysian and Singaporean JI terrorists have mentioned Osama bin Laden’s February 1998 fatwa declaring *jihad* on the Jewish-Crusader alliance as justification for their own terror activities. A third mechanism of disengaging the self-sanctions against killing is *dehumanization* of the Other, usually through the propagation of hate propaganda. For example, during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Hutu hate propaganda frequently characterized the Tutsi as “snakes, animals, and most often, cockroaches”.<sup>151</sup> By way of comparison, Hamas propaganda frequently portrays Israelis and Jews as “monkeys”.<sup>152</sup> Basically self-sanctions against “cruel conduct can be disengaged or blunted by divesting people of human qualities”. In Bandura’s words:

Once dehumanized, the potential victims are no longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes, and concerns but as subhuman objects. They are portrayed as mindless ‘savages’, ‘gooks’ ...and the like. Subhumans are regarded as insensitive to maltreatment and capable of being influenced only by harsh methods.<sup>153</sup>

Dehumanization certainly played a role in helping JI terrorists engage in atrocities: Amrozi, convicted for his role in the 12 October 2002 Bali bombings, revealed his utter lack of empathy for the humanity of his victims when he shrugged off the

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<sup>148</sup> Kumar Ramakrishna and See Seng Tan, “Is Southeast Asia a ‘Terrorist Haven’?”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>149</sup> Dan Murphy, “How Al Qaeda Lit the Bali Fuse: Part 2”, *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 June 2003.

<sup>150</sup> Bandura, “Mechanisms”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, p. 173.

<sup>151</sup> Kressel, *Mass Hate*, p. 93.

<sup>152</sup> Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: Free Press, 2002), p. 94.

<sup>153</sup> Bandura, “Mechanisms”, in Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, pp. 180-181.

suggestion that they had killed Australians instead of Americans by quipping: “Australians, Americans, whatever – they are all white people”.<sup>154</sup> For his part, Amrozi’s brother and senior JI leader Mukhlas himself declared that all Westerners were “dirty animals and insects that need to be wiped out”.<sup>155</sup>

## **Taking Stock**

This essay has tried to show that Islamist radicalization, or in short, the process by which a young Muslim Indonesian may be transformed into a radical Islamist terrorist, is a complex one. It involves the interplay of four factors: important historical, political and socio-cultural elements predisposing certain communities of concern toward radicalism; the existence of a Wahhabi-like ideology providing a religious justification for violence against outsiders; the extremist worldviews of key elites of smaller, tightly-knit constituencies of hate held together by a network of radicalized ideological spaces; and the deliberate employment of psychological mechanisms to disengage the self-sanctions against killing. The question has to be asked: can anything be done to stem the process of Islamist radicalization? This essay ends by proposing four tentative *de-radicalization* strategies within the Indonesian milieu that with the necessary careful and context-specific adjustments may have possibly wider applicability.

First, there is an overwhelming need to broaden if not eliminate the narrow worldviews promoted by socially isolated, radicalized ideological spaces that serve as the loci of constituencies of hate. In our analysis, Al-Mukmin may be regarded as such a locus, or ideological ground zero, for the Sungkar/Bashir constituency of hate. It is interesting that Farid Ma'ruf, a senior *ustaz* at Al-Mukmin, once defended the general culture of the pesantren, asking rhetorically:<sup>156</sup>

There is one community. Then there are some members of that community who have done something wrong. Is that community also at fault?

This essay answers yes, not because this pesantren is directly involved in terrorist atrocities, but rather because it promotes a mindset, a mental template that under certain

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<sup>154</sup> John Dawson, “The Bali Bombers: What Motivates Death Worship?”, *Capitalism Magazine*, 19 October 2003, available at <http://www.capmag.com/article.asp?ID=3000> (accessed 1 September 2004).

<sup>155</sup> Dawson, “The Bali Bombers”.

<sup>156</sup> Maria Ressa, “Jihad Rules in Islamic School”, *CNN.com*, 26 Feb. 2004.

circumstances may well tip certain alumni over into embracing violence. Here Gaylin's insightful comment, cited above, about possible differences in opinion between the Islamic law professor and his students as to the "proper expressions of hatred" toward infidels, should be heeded. As Al-Mukmin alumnus Noor Huda Ismail argues, what is important is that the relatively cloistered spaces such as Al-Mukmin need greater formal exposure to *difference*. This implies exposure to different interpretations of key concepts such as *jihad* by visiting *ustaz* from other *aliran* (ideological streams); more inter-faith dialogues; dialogues with alumni that have become successful in the secular world; and in general greater contact with and more access to information about the outside world.<sup>157</sup> When Christians and Jews are seen more as fellow human beings than "disembodied" abstractions, the potential for radicalism and ultimately terrorism is decreased.<sup>158</sup> In addition, Charles Kimball correctly argues that at the heart of healthy religion is the willingness of teachers and followers to ask questions, and to challenge dogma. Absolute truth claims and blind obedience are two signs of corrupted religion.<sup>159</sup>

Second, effectually challenging and delegitimizing the binary worldviews propagated by the leaders of micro-level constituencies of hate is not sufficient. Commensurate, parallel action is also needed at the macro-level – involving historic communities of concern, such as those regions of Indonesia that have had a legacy of Islamist radicalism. A potentially useful way to gradually engage with these wider communities of concern would be *intra*-faith, not so much inter-faith dialogue. Islamic scholars and community leaders from the two largest mass-based Indonesian Muslim organizations, the rural-based traditionalist Nadhlatul Ulama and the urban-based modernist Muhammadiyah, are strategically positioned to engage with key elements of these wider communities of concern, pushing, over the medium to long term, for what Rachid Ghannouchi once called a "realistic fundamentalism" or *usuliyah waqiyah*, rather than a rigid, doctrinaire Islam imported from 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia and unresponsive to the complexities of 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalized Indonesia.<sup>160</sup> As Kimball argues, "even in the face of the worst examples of religious extremism", all the "resources needed for reform can be found at the heart of the major religious traditions".<sup>161</sup> Thus the antidote to radical

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<sup>157</sup> NH Ismail IDSS Talk.

<sup>158</sup> J. Harold Ellens, "Revenge, Justice, and Hope: Laura Blumenfeld's Journey", in Ellens, *The Destructive Power of Religion, Vol. 4: Contemporary Views on Spirituality and Violence*, ed. by J. Harold Ellens (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), pp. 227-235.

<sup>159</sup> Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, pp. 41-99.

<sup>160</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 108.

<sup>161</sup> Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, p. 188.



Islamism lies within Islam itself. For instance, some devout Javanese Muslims have always felt that the Islamists' fixation with the formal implementation of *shariah* was "an odd goal for a true Muslim to aspire to". The *shariah* is not the end, but only the way to the true goal: *hakikat*, or self-mastery, "Islam's highest level".<sup>162</sup>

Third, improving the capacity of the Indonesian government to provide the key public goods of security, economic welfare and justice has to be part of the policy mix. In this respect, one of the attractions of private religious education for Indonesian parents is its relatively low cost, as well as the emphasis on moral values for "life's hard slog". This contrasts favorably with the state of public education, which remains in need of an overhaul.<sup>163</sup> In this connection, as far as the US Congress is concerned, the proposed Targeting Terrorists More Effectively Act of 2005, that states that it should be US policy to raise "\$7 to \$10 billion annually to fund education programs in Islamic countries" is a step in the right direction. The International Youth Opportunity Fund, currently designed to provide funding aid to improve public education in the Middle East, is something that can and should be extended to Indonesia as well.<sup>164</sup> In addition, helping the Indonesian government improve its overall capacity for effective governance to alleviate poverty, generate economic growth, and eliminate corruption in the justice system would go a long way toward reducing the "political oxygen" that radical Islamist elites exploit to strengthen the virulent worldviews they seek to propagate. While it would be folly to make a simplistic correlation between poverty and radical Islamist terrorism, economic development is not unimportant, especially since Indonesia, with half of its 220 million people living below the poverty line as defined by the World Bank, and whose annual growth rate remains just below 4 percent, has not been able to deal decisively with the poverty question.<sup>165</sup> This is why USAID/Indonesia's five-year, US \$750 million plan to "strengthen democratic and decentralized governance, improve the quality of basic education, support the delivery of higher quality basic human services, and strengthen economic growth to generate employment in the country," is a very positive step.<sup>166</sup>

Last but by no means least, improving America's image around the Muslim world would also be important. Part of the problem encumbering progressive Indonesian

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<sup>162</sup> Dahlby, *Allah's Torch*, p. 265.

<sup>163</sup> Dahlby, *Allah's Torch*, pp. 231-232.

<sup>164</sup> Blanchard, "Islamic Religious Schools", p. 6.

<sup>165</sup> AusAid, Indonesia Country program page, 10 Feb 2005, available online at <http://www.usaid.gov/au/country/country.cfm?CountryId=30> (accessed 14 May 2005).

<sup>166</sup> US Embassy Indonesia Press Release, 7 May 2005.

Muslims as they square off against the Islamists and radical Islamists is that US policy to the Muslim world often appears anti-Muslim. This can cause many progressive Muslim scholars in Indonesia to be wary of being too closely associated with Washington. In this regard the notorious and extremely damaging Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq, as well as unintended civilian casualties arising from ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan<sup>167</sup> all tend to generate more political oxygen for radical Islamists in Indonesia to fuel their Storylines of a global Islamic community under attack by the vicious “Crusader-Jewish alliance”. This is partly why in Indonesia, conspiracy theories concerning the CIA’s alleged involvement in the Bali and Marriott terror attacks of October 2002 and August 2003 respectively continue to retain a certain currency not just among radical Islamists but even more moderate Indonesian Muslims.<sup>168</sup>

Quite apart from stepped-up public diplomacy showcasing the ways America has sought to help the global *ummah*, such as the interventions in Kuwait (1990), Bosnia (1995) and Kosovo (1999) to aid oppressed Muslims, and over and above effective publicity showcasing US aid to Indonesia following the devastating tsunami of December 2004, care must be taken to ensure that stark, eminently avoidable errors in US policy, strategy and tactics are minimized. In this regard, allegations by *Newsweek* magazine in May 2005 that US military interrogators at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba “flushed” a Quran “down the toilet”, are precisely what should be avoided at all costs. Not only did this news generate a global Muslim uproar, with demonstrations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Gaza Strip and even Makassar in eastern Indonesia, it has also become additional political oxygen that radical Islamist elites can now use to radicalize the next generation of JI terrorists.<sup>169</sup> Sun Tzu, the great Chinese strategist, once said that one must fight with wisdom and not just force alone. Winning the war on terror in Indonesia and elsewhere would require that his advice be taken to heart.

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<sup>167</sup> See in similar vein the recent report by Carl Conetta, “Vicious Circle: The Dynamics of Occupation and Resistance in Iraq”, Project on Defense Alternatives *Research Monograph* no.10, 18 May 2005. Conetta observes that “Iraqi public opinion data and interviews suggests that coalition military activity may be substantially contributing to Iraqi discontent and opposition”, and that a “vicious circle”, where “actions to curtail the insurgency feed the insurgency”, has developed.

<sup>168</sup> For instance, Tatik S. Hafidz, “Assessing Indonesia’s Vulnerability in the Wake of the American-Led Attack on Iraq”, in Ramakrishna and Tan, eds., *After Bali*, p. 391.

<sup>169</sup> Stephen Graham, “Protests Spread in Afghanistan, 8 Killed”, *Associated Press*, 16 May 2005. *Newsweek* editor Daniel Klaidman later retracted the story, but this did little to placate Muslim anger completely. See for instance, Shaikh Riyadh Nadwi, “I Want to Believe You Mr Klaidman but Your Retraction Has the Opposite Effect”, Oxford Cross-Cultural Research Institute (OCCRI) press statement, 16 May 2005 available online at [www.occricri.org.uk](http://www.occricri.org.uk), (accessed 17 May 2005).

# **Political Islam in Southern Thailand – A Radicalisation?**

Sabrina Chua

## **Introduction**

Separatism in the southern Malay-Muslim majority provinces of Thailand has long displayed the characteristics of Political Islam, despite the movement being essentially an ethno-nationalist one. Islam is an important component of the ethnic Malay identity in the southern Thai provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat and has thus influenced the means and ends of the separatists. With the recent upsurge in violence in 2004, many observers have questioned whether the attacks signify a radicalisation of Political Islam in southern Thailand. This paper will explore whether Political Islam in southern Thailand has indeed been radicalised, by examining statements and literature produced by the militants in the insurgency thus far and by studying the religious institutions that have played a significant role in the separatist movement in the south of Thailand.

## **Political Islam – What is it?**

Before delving into the analysis proper, definitions are in order to ascertain the phenomenon under scrutiny – Political Islam. Scholars diverge with regards to the use of this term, with some preferring to opt for alternatives such as ‘Islamism’, ‘militant Islam’ and ‘Islamic resurgence’. However, these terms are more or less used interchangeably, and there is a consensus emerging as to the core meaning of these terms. Political Islam is in essence the idea or concept that Islam and politics are two inseparable parts. The distinguishing mark of Political Islam is its goal – the “Islamisation of the political order, which is tantamount to toppling existing regimes, with the implication of de-Westernisation”.<sup>170</sup> Proponents of Political Islam intend to replace existing regimes with the Islamic state, run under the *sharia* (the Divine Law). Some groups advocate violent overthrow as the means of establishing an Islamic order, while others have advocated more peaceful, evolutionary change.<sup>171</sup> Despite the difference in methods, the ultimate

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<sup>170</sup> Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p138.

<sup>171</sup> Giles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp.23-4.

goal of an Islamic state remains the same. This goal is said to be an obligation for all Muslims.<sup>172</sup>

### **Determining Radicalisation**

How do we determine whether the Political Islam practised in southern Thailand has been radicalised? To do this, we first need to understand the definition of the term 'radicalisation'. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, radicalisation is marked by a considerable departure from the usual or traditional. Radicalisation advocates extreme measures to retain or restore a political state of affairs.

In the context of Islam, radicalisation can also refer to taking on the characteristics of radical Islam. According to David Cook, proponents of radical Islam usually support a total and global belief system which envisions a unified Muslim state that will eventually encompass all Muslims in the world. This would be ruled by the caliph or imam who will implement the *sharia* in its totality without regard to or dependence upon foreign influences. This messianic vision will be achieved by means of waging jihad against the (perceived) enemies of Islam with the purpose of purifying Islam. Radical Islam sees itself as the sole representatives of true Islam in accordance with the historical tradition, and cultivates this image by using the term 'Muslim' for itself alone, and referring to all other 'Muslims' as either 'infidels' or 'apostates'.<sup>173</sup>

With these 'markers' of radicalisation established, we can make a more accurate determination of whether there has been a radicalisation of Political Islam in southern Thailand.

### **Historical Overview of Malay Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand**

To better understand the situation in the southern provinces of Thailand today, we need to dig into the historical roots of the conflict. Geographically, the Muslim population in Thailand has been concentrated in the south, particularly in the provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani, collectively known as the Southern Border Provinces.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> 'Islam as a Political Movement', *Wikipedia*. Available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_as\\_a\\_political\\_movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_as_a_political_movement). Last accessed: 20 May 2005.

<sup>173</sup> David Cook, 'The Recovery of Radical Islam in the Wake of the Defeat of the Taliban', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.15, No.1 (Spring 2003), pp.31-56.

<sup>174</sup> See the analysis of Clive Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996).

The three Southern Border Provinces now constitute the restive segments in southern Thailand. These provinces, together with Songkhla, Satun, and the northern Malay states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and northern Kedah, were all part of what was known as Patani Raya (Greater Patani<sup>175</sup>), a domain of the earlier Sultanate of Patani, which was itself derived from the ancient kingdom of Langkasuka.<sup>176</sup> The population in the south consisted of settlers of Malay ethnicity, “with their own culture, their own religion, their own language and their own kingdom.”<sup>177</sup>

After the fall of Malacca in 1511, the kingdom’s stature as a major trading centre grew with Indian-Muslim traders competing vigorously with the kingdom of Sumatra in Aceh. In 1786, the forces of Rama I, the founder of the Chakri Dynasty in Siam (which continues to the present), invaded Patani. Its ruler Sultan Muhammad was killed and the city was destroyed. Many Malays were taken to Bangkok as slaves. In 1791 and 1808, there were several rebellions against the central Thai rule which led to short periods of nominal independence in the southern provinces. The Thai Provincial Administration Act of May 1897 (Phraratchabanyat Laksana Pakkhrong Thongthi) was later enacted and effectively destroyed whatever remained of the southern states provincial independent existence. In 1902, Siam formally annexed Patani. The seven provinces of Patani—Pattani, Nong Chik, Saiburi, Yala, Yaring, Ra-ngae and Reman—came under the Boriween Chet Huamuang (Area of the Seven Provinces), which was placed under a centralised administrative structure governed by Siamese-appointed bureaucrats.<sup>178</sup> In 1906, the seven Malay provinces were brought even closer together under a single administrative unit called Monthon Pattani. Following the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, which recognised Siam’s absolute suzerainty over Pattani, there have been systematic attempts to develop a mono-ethnic Buddhist Thai character, which was seen to be at odds with the Islamic identity in the provinces of Pattani.<sup>179</sup> Thus even as the Malay

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<sup>175</sup> ‘Patani’ is the Malay spelling, used to refer to the Malay Sultanate of Patani. ‘Pattani’ is based on the Thai spelling. Hereafter, ‘Patani’ will be used when referring to the Malay kingdom, while ‘Pattani’ will be used to refer to the Thai administrative region.

<sup>176</sup> Jan M Pluvier, *Historical Atlas of Southeast Asia* (Leiden, New York and Koln: E. J. Brill, 1995), p11.

<sup>177</sup> Grandson of Haji Sulong, ‘Colonisation reason for southern Thai conflict’, *Malaysiakini*, 9 November 2004. Available at <http://www.malaysiakini.com/letters/31339>. Last accessed: 20 May 2005.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Syed Serajul Islam, ‘The Islamic Independence Movements in Pattani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines’, *Asian Survey* vol. 38 (May 1982): 441–56.

Muslims in Pattani became a part of the Thai nation, they remained a self-conscious ethnic minority that is still culturally distinctive today.<sup>180</sup>

### **Islam in Pattani**

The Patani Kingdom in south Thailand was known to be a major centre for Islamic learning, comparable to the prestigious Sultanate of Aceh itself.<sup>181</sup> It was then considered as the “cradle of Islam” in Southeast Asia.<sup>182</sup> The Islamic teachings affirmed the traditional virtues and greatness of the kingdom of Patani, the identification with the Malay race and a religious orientation towards Islam.<sup>183</sup> The centralisation of the Thai state since the eighteenth century had brought the Patani Kingdom under Buddhist influence, with controls exerted in taxation, education and through Thai-icising the local culture, language, and religion, with a reform orientation that sought to abolish backward customs and dialects and to enforce uniformity in social behaviour. The Education Act of 1921 forced Muslims to attend Siamese schools to receive a secular education. Muslim scholars were greatly undermined as Islamic schools were forced to close down. The act also saw the promotion of the Qur’an in the Thai language, an insult to Muslims, as it is not permissible in Islam to reproduce the Qur’an in any other language without its original Arabic text. There were also attempts at the integration of the southern Muslims into mainstream Thai Buddhist society.

### **Thai Political Dynamics and Muslim Separatism**

One of the earliest manifestations of discontent against what the southern Muslims call “Thai imperial dominance” was in 1903, when Patani Malay aristocrat Tengku Abdul Kadir Qamaruddin revolted against Bangkok. However he was defeated and imprisoned. After another failed attempt in 1915, Tengku Abdul Kadir fled to Kelantan and attempted to regroup his forces with the help of its ruler, Sultan Muhammad IV. In response to the educational reforms imposed under the Education Act

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<sup>180</sup> Geoffrey M. White and Chavivun Prachubmah, ‘The Cognitive Organization of Ethnic Images’, *Ethos* Vol. 11, No. 1/2 (Spring–Summer 1983), p9.

<sup>181</sup> Christie, ‘A Modern History of Southeast Asia’, p174.

<sup>182</sup> Carlo Bonura Jr., ‘Location and the Dilemmas of Muslim Political Community in Southern Thailand’, paper presented at the First Inter-Dialogue Conference on Southern Thailand, (University of Washington, Seattle, 13–15 June 2002), p15. Available at [http://mis-pattani.pn.psu.ac.th/registra/grade/temp/speech/Bonura/Bonura's%20paper%20\(panel%2016\).html](http://mis-pattani.pn.psu.ac.th/registra/grade/temp/speech/Bonura/Bonura's%20paper%20(panel%2016).html). Last Accessed: 20 May 2005.

<sup>183</sup> Connor Bailey and John Miksic, ‘The Country of Patani in the Period of Re-Awakening: A Chapter from Ibrahim Syukri’s *Serjarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani*’, in *The Muslims in Thailand, Volume II: Politics of the Malay-Speaking South*, ed. Andrew Forbes (Bihar: Centre for South East Asian Studies, 1989), p151.

of 1921, Tengku Abdul Kadir launched one of the biggest campaigns against Bangkok. The education reform was seen as a deliberate and calculated attempt to erase Pattani-Malay identity and to convert the Pattani Malays to Buddhism.<sup>184</sup> However, the rebellion failed and many key leaders were either captured or killed.

In 1932, the military under General Phibun Songkhram, a right-wing nationalist, seized power in Thailand. This marked the beginning of the manifestation of the concept of popular sovereignty in Thai political space and Thai nationalism. In 1939, General Phibun's government introduced the *Thai Ratthaniyom* (Thai Customs Decree), which forced all Thai citizens including the minority groups to conform to a set of common cultural norms.<sup>185</sup> Muslims were prevented from adopting Muslim names or using the Malay dialect. The *sharia* was replaced by Thai Buddhist laws of marriage and inheritance.<sup>186</sup> In some cases, Muslims were even forced to participate in the public worship of Buddhist idols, and men were required to wear western-style trousers.<sup>187</sup> This process challenged the ethno-cultural identity of the Muslims and led them to rebel against the central government. The community not only offered resistance but also "threw up a new cadre of religious leaders".<sup>188</sup> However the rebellion was harshly quelled. Many Pattani leaders were either killed or arrested and many of them fled to Malaysia.

During the Second World War, the Malay Muslims were on the side of the British while the Thais were supportive of the Japanese. Under the leadership of Tun Mahmud Mahyuddin and Haji Sulong Tohmeena, the president of the Islamic Religious Council, the Malay Muslims fought alongside the British, believing they had an agreement that the latter would grant independence to Pattani. The goals of Tun Mahmud and Haji Sulong however differed. The former favoured the re-establishment of the Pattani Sultanate, while Haji Sulong was for an Islamic republic in Pattani. In 1945, the Malay leaders under Tengku Abdul Jalal, petitioned the British to grant independence to four southern

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<sup>184</sup> Wan Kadir Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, (Ateneo de Manila University Press: Manila, 1990), pp63–4.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Andrew D. W. Forbes, 'Thailand's Muslim Minorities: Assimilation, Secession, or Coexistence?', *Asian Survey* Vol. 22 (November 1982), pp1056–73

<sup>187</sup> Che Man, *Muslim Separatism*, p65.

<sup>188</sup> Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics*, (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), p271. For more information on the Muslim leaders and organisations, see Areepen Uttrasin, *The Local Administration of the Special Area of the Five Provinces in the South of Thailand* (in Thai, unpublished, the Partial Fulfilment Report for the High Certificate, King Prajadhipok's Institute, 2002), p3–4.

provinces from Thailand. However, the British reneged on their ‘gentlemen’s agreement’, as for them, a unified Thai state was a strategic counterweight to the communist insurgency in China, Indochina, and Malaya. This marked the beginning of militant separatism in 1946.

This period also signalled the beginning of the separatist movement taking on a Political Islam bent. Before Haji Sulong emerged on the scene, the Patani struggle against Thai domination and subjugation was centred upon the leadership and traditional power of the raja and king of the old Patani kingdom. Islam as a driving political and cultural force was minimal or even absent before the 1940s. The emergence of Haji Sulong as leader of the Muslim community in the south, at a time when the palace of Patani was empty, began to offer new vision and consciousness of the people’s identity.<sup>189</sup> With his goal of establishing an Islamic state in Pattani, Haji Sulong had injected Malay nationalism with the aim of political autonomy based on Islamic principles. Haji Sulong had become the champion of Political Islam in Pattani.

Since Haji Sulong’s death in 1954, there have been a number of separatist groups that have taken up the cause of establishing an independent Islamic state in the three southern provinces. The Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) or the National Revolutionary Front, the Pattani United Liberation Front (PULO) and the New PULO appear to be at the forefront of the separatist struggle. While adhering to the same objectives, these groups differed in their ideological orientation and did not foster any unity amongst themselves.<sup>190</sup>

According to some scholars, the Pattani resistance movements developed a more radical Islamist character following the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, with groups such as the Pattani National Liberation Front (BNPP), moving closer to the global current of Islamist radicalism.<sup>191</sup> A few examples bear this out. In 1979, the BNPP upgraded its military training programme. In 1985, the more radical and insurgent elements of the BNPP broke away and formed the Barisan Bersatu Mujahideen Pattani (BBMP, United

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<sup>189</sup> Thanet Aphornsuvan, ‘Origins of Malay Muslim “Separatism” in Southern Thailand’, *Asia Research Institute*, Working Paper Series No. 32, October 2004.

<sup>190</sup> See the analysis of R. J. May, ‘The Religious Factors in Three Minority Movements’, *Contemporary South East Asia*, Vol.13, No. 4 (1992): pp403–4; and Dan Bristow, ‘Porous Borders Aids Muslim Insurgency’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review Pointer* 005/003 (March 1998).

<sup>191</sup> Farish A. Noor, ‘The Killings in Southern Thailand: A Long History of Persecution Unrecorded’, *Just International*, 15 May 2004. Available at: [http://www.just-international.org/article\\_print.cfm?newsid=20000634](http://www.just-international.org/article_print.cfm?newsid=20000634). Last Accessed: 20 May 2005.



Mujahideen Front of Pattani) under the leadership of Wahyuddin Muhammad. In 1986, the BNPP renamed itself the Barisan Islam Pembebasan Pattani (BIPP, Islamic Liberation Front of Pattani) with a view to “underline its stronger commitment to Islamist politics.”<sup>192</sup> The establishment of the Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP) is also said to be an example of a more radical take on Political Islam. Created in 1995 by Nasori Saesaeng, an Afghan war veteran, GMIP has allegedly set its deadline for achieving the establishment of an Islamic state in Pattani by 2008.<sup>193</sup> As it is mostly made up of Afghan veterans, GMIP is believed to share Al Qaeda’s vision of a worldwide Islamic caliphate.<sup>194</sup>

### **The Phenomenological Approach**

While it is important to base conclusions on the state of Political Islam in southern Thailand on observations of the separatists’ actions and stated goals, a better assessment of the situation would be arrived at if the meaning of Islam as understood by the violent actors themselves were also examined.<sup>195</sup> This task can be performed by using the phenomenological method, which this paper will adopt.

For phenomenologists, society is viewed as a dialectic between objective givenness and subjective meanings; that is, as being constituted by the reciprocal interaction of what is experienced as outside reality and what is experienced as being within the consciousness of the individual. Phenomenologists suggest that language and understanding are less a function of things in the world and more a function of people’s interpretations of those things. Therefore, a more fruitful investigation of social reality would be for social scientists to see things as the social actors see them; then “their” actions would be most meaningful.<sup>196</sup>

For the purposes of this paper, I will use the phenomenological approach by focusing on the literature that has surfaced in the southern Thai insurgency thus far. In particular, I will concentrate on material produced by two groups – PULO and the

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Jason Gagliardi, ‘Behind the News-Fear and Fervour’, *South China Morning Post*, 5 February 2004.

<sup>194</sup> Rob Fanne, ‘Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP-Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement)’, *Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, 31 October 2002.

<sup>195</sup> Schutz, as quoted in Chaiwat Satha-Anand, ‘Islam and Violence: A Case study of Violent Events in the Four Southern Provinces, Thailand, 1976-1981’, *USF Monographs in Religion and Public Policy, No.2* (Florida: The Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida, 1987), p2.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p3.

*Hikmat Allah Abadan* (Brotherhood of the Eternal Judgement of God) – as these have emerged as the most significant messages disseminated by southern Thai separatist groups in recent history.

### **PULO Literature**

This section of the paper is based on a study conducted by Chaiwat Satha-Anand, who examined PULO leaflets from 1976 to 1981.<sup>197</sup> After discussing Chaiwat's findings, I will compare them with the recent statements from PULO, to examine if there has been a radicalisation of their ideology, which has its roots in Political Islam.

Established on 22 March 1968, PULO was once dubbed the most active and effective separatist organisation in the 1970s, but its power has dwindled since the late 1980s. Leader Shamsudin Khan is currently in exile in Sweden and the group has not been active operationally in recent times. It has however been active in its propaganda, especially in the recent upsurge in violence in 2004. It appears that PULO sees itself as the “voice of the groups in the south of Thailand” and issues statements regularly, condemning government actions and warning of future attacks.

According to Chaiwat, PULO's leaflets in the period between 1976 and 1981 were usually found at the scene of attacks and functioned primarily as claims of responsibility for incidents. However, he discovered that the group also issued pamphlets to justify their violent means. Through the leaflets, PULO rationalised their acts of violence as reactions to the government's violence, which were interpreted as affronts to Islam. Chaiwat concluded that the dynamic of the leaflets rests on the fact that they interact with the deep beliefs of the southern Thai Muslims. The power of these pamphlets, according to Chaiwat, served to remind Muslims of their identity and their existential reality, as well as to provide possible justifications for violence.

In his 1986 study, Chaiwat outlined four steps that PULO takes in creating these messages. The first step involves identifying the distinctiveness of Islam. PULO carves out the social boundary of a Muslim community. In articulating who ‘we’ are, the definition of who ‘they’ are becomes clearer.<sup>198</sup> Chaiwat states that PULO does this by discussing articles of faith in Islam (Iman) and emphasises the five pillars of Islam – that

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p31.

there is no god but Allah and Muhammed is his messenger, that Muslims should pray five times a day, that they should pay the *zakat* (religious tax), fast during Ramadan, and make pilgrimage to Mecca. PULO usually went on to reiterate Muslims' distinctiveness by making statements such as: "We follow Allah while they follow Buddhism which reveres the Buddha image. We pray and fast while they do neither."<sup>199</sup> This essentially creates an 'us versus them' type of mentality and sows the seeds of sectarian conflict.

The second step that PULO employs in its leaflets is to remind the people of the superiority of Islam. Verses from the Qur'an such as the following are cited:

"Ye are the best  
Of Peoples, evolved  
For mankind,  
Enjoining what is right,  
And believing in God."

(Al-Qur'an, iii:110)<sup>200</sup>

PULO uses these verses to indoctrinate the people into thinking that Muslims are superior to Buddhists, and implies that Muslims should not live under their rule.

Step three involves PULO calling for unity among the Muslims. It usually cites the following verse to show that all Muslims are one nation:

"And hold fast  
All together, by the Rope  
Which God (stretches out  
  
For you), and be not divided  
Among yourselves..."

(Al-Qur'an, iii:103)<sup>201</sup>

This step is a strategic move on the part of PULO as it fits in with the group's strategy of building a broad-based support system. Unlike the BRN which was originally established with socialist leanings, PULO aims to bring all elements of Muslim society

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<sup>199</sup> PULO, 6 December 1977, as cited in Satha-Anand, 'Islam and Violence', p32.

<sup>200</sup> PULO, 28 July 1977; 6 December 1977, Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

together to establish an independent Islamic Pattani state. The group perhaps sees itself as a unifying force in the southern Thai insurgency and the pamphlets may be one of the methods it uses to convince the Muslim people, regardless of their ideological leanings, to band together with PULO.

After group unity has been underscored, the next and final step is critical. PULO reminds Muslims that it is obligatory for them to fight the *kafir* (non-believers). The leaflets frequently remind Muslims that it is wrong to be under the governance of non-Muslims.<sup>202</sup> The most popular verse that is cited in PULO leaflets to bring home this point is the following:

“Fight those who believe not  
In God nor the Last Day,  
Nor hold that forbidden  
By God and His Apostle,  
Nor acknowledge the Religion  
Of Truth, (even if they are)  
Of the People of the Book,  
Until they pay the *Jizya* (compensation)  
With willing submission,  
And feel themselves subdued  
But when the forbidden months  
Are past then the fight and slay  
The Pagans wherever ye find them.”  
(Al-Qur’an ix:5)<sup>203</sup>

Another verse that has been cited more than once is:

“That ye believe in God  
And His Apostle, and that  
Ye strive (your utmost)  
In the Cause of God,  
With your property  
And your persons:  
That will be best for you  
If ye but knew.”  
(Al-Qur’an, Ixi:11)<sup>204</sup>

This verse calls on Muslims to give their utmost in the fight for God. The verse has been interpreted by PULO to mean killing, taking property, and destroying Buddhist

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<sup>202</sup> Jeh Guding, 21 January 1977; PULO, 21 July 1978, Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> As cited in Satha-Anand, ‘Islam and Violence’, pp32-3.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p33.

temples and idols.<sup>205</sup> This verse is also significant because of the phrase “And your persons”. Here, PULO can be said to use this verse to imply the giving of one’s life – martyrdom – in the fight for an independent Islamic state of Pattani. Hence, the concept of martyrdom in southern Thailand is not new. Since the late 1970s, PULO has attempted to indoctrinate Muslims into fighting to their death for the establishment of an Islamic state, dying for God.

For those who decline to take part in the fight, PULO states that they will be regarded as hypocrites.

“And the hypocrites also,  
These were told: ‘Come,  
Fight in the way of God,  
Or (at least) drive  
(The foe from your city).’  
They said: ‘Had we known  
How to fight, we should  
Certainly have followed you.  
They were that day  
Nearer to Unbelief  
Than to Faith.”

(Al-Qur’an, iii:167)<sup>206</sup>

These verses help to persuade the Muslim reader to take up the fight for an Islamic Pattani or forever be branded a hypocrite.

### **PULO Statements Today**

Violence has steadily increased since 2001 and while there are still leaflets being left behind at sites of attacks, no attribution has been given. The only PULO literature available to this researcher is the statements posted on its website. The following is a statement that was issued by PULO after the Tak Bai incident on 25 October 2004 where more than 80 protesters were killed.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid, p34.

<sup>206</sup> PULO, April 1978, Ibid, pp34-5.

“Their capital will be burned down in the same way the Pattani capital has been burned... We pledge before Allah that from now on, the infidel will suffer sleepless nights, the property they have robbed from us will be totally destroyed and their lives will face consequences for the sins they have committed... Their blood will be shed on the soil and flow into water. Our weapon is fire and oil, fire and oil, fire and oil.”

The statement, like the previous PULO leaflets, justifies future attacks as a reaction to Thai government measures. While there is no citation from the Qur’an, the statement still uses religious references such as “Allah” and “infidel”. Another point to note in this statement is the reference to the Thai capital as *Phra Nakorn*, a term that refers to the capital of Siam at the time of the Ayutthaya era, instead of referring to the modern-day capital Krungthep or Bangkok. This shows that the PULO mindset is still very much fixed in the traditional separatist paradigm.

PULO has issued other statements on its website, stating that it is determined to see a new wave of violence unleashed against Thai police and military personnel. It also went on to elaborate that its operations target Thai policemen and soldiers only. However, it did warn tourists to stay away from the Muslim-dominated southern provinces and cautioned them against visiting the tourist centres of Phuket, Krabi and the capital Bangkok.

### **PULO Today**

Comparing PULO literature over time, it cannot be concluded that the group’s ideology, which is based on Political Islam, has been radicalised. The statements issued by the group today are not a marked departure from those issued when it was first established. The only stylistic in the statements of today is that PULO does not use citations from the Qur’an. This is an interesting development considering the trend of radical Islamists who use citations from the Qu’ran to justify violence. However, the idea of fighting the infidels is still present, as is the clear division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – the Muslims and the Buddhists. PULO continues to use its statements to justify attacks as reaction against Thai government measures.

The statements today also reveal that PULO sees its fight very much as a nationalistic struggle. The literature shows that the group has not adopted the characteristics of radical Islam – of wanting to create a *global* Islamic caliphate.

Furthermore, it continues to use the terminology of the time of the Ayutthaya era (Phra Nakorn), revealing that it continues to view its fight as a battle to restore the Patani kingdom.

### **Berjihad di Pattani – The Fight for the Liberation of Pattani**

Found on the body of one of the militants who died in the battle at the Krue Se Mosque in Pattani on 28 April 2004, the Berjihad di Pattani, or the Fight for the Liberation of Pattani, is the first literature of its kind to emerge in southern Thailand. The 34-page booklet was written in Jawi<sup>207</sup> by a resident of Kelantan, Malaysia - Ismuljamineh (alias Poh Su) – and Abdul Wahab, a religious teacher at Tarpia Tulwatan Mullaniti Islamic Boarding School in Yala. Thai intelligence officers claim Poh Su, who is not a religious scholar, was paid RM2,000 to write the manual.<sup>208</sup>

The Berjihad di Pattani was used by a group known as *Hikmat Allah Abadan* (Brotherhood of the Eternal Judgement of God), or simply Abadan<sup>209</sup>, to indoctrinate its members to fight for greater autonomy of the Pattani state to the point of giving up their lives. It emphasised that Muslims should not live among unbelievers and be ruled by them.

“Allah has elucidated with clear words to the believers that... those who take and support disbelievers as their leaders to seek their favour or to destroy our honourable Islam, they are the hypocrites. They are the most dangerous enemies of Allah. They are our enemies too, because they live among Muslims.”

In other words, the manual states that those who do not take up the fight against the Thai Buddhists are hypocrites and should be considered enemies of the true Muslims. This is similar to the PULO literature and is also one of the characteristics of radical Islam as outlined earlier in this paper. The booklet goes on to warn Muslims to beware of such hypocrites:

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<sup>207</sup> Jawi is the Malay language written in Arabic script.

<sup>208</sup> For a full analysis and translation of the Berjihad di Pattani, see Rohan Gunaratna, Arabinda Acharya and Sabrina Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005).

<sup>209</sup> See “Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad”, *International Crisis Group*, Asia Report No. 98, 18 May 2005.

“Sometimes you may see them carrying out obligations to Allah by praying, fasting, giving alms, etc. In reality, their actions or practices are a disguise, for their hearts are filled with hatred and fury against Islam.”

According to the manual, the punishment for such hypocrites is Hell.

“And the punishment they will receive from Allah in the Hereafter is hell at the lowest level. Know that they are no longer your relatives and parents.”

This statement can be considered rather extreme as it is urging Muslims to disown their relatives if they do not join in the fight to liberate Pattani. This bears some resemblance to the Wahabi school of Islam where Muslims who do not follow Wahabi beliefs are considered infidels and all ties with them are severed.

The manual goes on to elucidate the glory of martyrdom. “...how glorious we will be if we fall as warriors of our land... When martyrs are killed, they are not dead but alive next to God.”

Although the concept of martyrdom in southern Thailand is not new, this is perhaps the first time that martyrdom is explicitly discussed. In the PULO literature that was analysed earlier, martyrdom, while exalted, was not directly referred to. In the Berjihad di Pattani, it is clearly spelt out that Muslims should delight in giving their lives in the cause of God. This is perhaps what led some youths to fight to their death on April 28.

Unlike the PULO literature which deals only with the conflict in southern Thailand, the Berjihad di Pattani attempts to broaden the conflict, creating the image that Muslims the world over are under siege.

“Observe and look in every corner of the world: the disbelievers are hunting down our Muslim brothers and sisters. The disbelievers make alliances throughout the world in order to annihilate Muslims.”

This is clearly an attempt to radicalise the people, a tactic that global jihad groups such as Al Qaeda employ.

Despite displaying features of radical Islam and extremist thinking, the Berjihad di Pattani also exhibits other elements that reveal the manual is not in line with the beliefs



of the Wahabi or Salafi school. The manual is peppered with verses such as the following:

“Keep in mind and mention the name of Allah many times. By doing so, hopefully we will achieve victory. Therefore, recite, mention, and memorise frequently.”

This seems to share similarities with the Tariqah movement, which emphasises the inner, spiritual aspects of the religion.<sup>210</sup> People who follow the tariqah movement belong to the Sufi order, which focuses on mysticism. In fact, members of the Abadan were said to perform *zikir*, the recitation of the name of Allah, and special prayers as many as 70,000 times a day for 40 days in order to become invisible at will and be impervious to bullets and knives.<sup>211</sup> This strain of Islam is very different from Wahabi groups such as Al Qaeda. In fact, the Wahabis consider Sufis their enemies. Thus it is unlikely that the authors of the manual are thinking along the same lines as the global jihadists.

There are other indications that the Berjihad di Pattani is not written in the same vein as the radical Islamists of today.

“For the stability and efficiency of the administration, the council must consist of ulama from the Shafi’i school of jurisprudence only.”

Here it is very clearly stated that the people who are to govern Pattani once an Islamic state is established should be from the Shafi’i school and not the Salafi or Wahabi school. Furthermore, the manual calls for a King or a Sultan to rule and establish the *sharia*, not a Caliph or an Imam. This clearly demonstrates that the Berjihad di Pattani does not reflect the current strain of radical Wahabi Islam that the global jihadists are propagating.

On the whole, the Berjihad di Pattani, while clearly framing separatism in explicit Islamic terms with detailed Qur’anic justifications for violence, is more Sufi than Salafi/Wahabi in tone. It displays elements of radicalisation and some elements of radical Islam. However, it is not following the global jihad track and reveals that the struggle for an independent Islamic Pattani is still conceived as a nationalistic struggle.

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<sup>210</sup> Surin Pitsuwan, “Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of The Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand”, PhD Thesis, *Harvard University*, June 1982, p.251.

<sup>211</sup> “Southern Thailand”, *International Crisis Group*, p22.

## The Role of Religious Schools

*Pondoks* or religious schools have long been a symbol of resistance in southern Thailand as the shutting down of these schools was partly what led to the formation of the BRN in the 1960s. Moreover, one of the biggest resistance movements against Bangkok was in response to educational reforms imposed under the Education Act of 1921, led by Tengku Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin. With the recent upsurge in violence in the south, these schools have been accused of being a breeding ground for Muslim insurgents and have also been named as sites where youths are being radicalised. These claims were made because many of the militants were found to come from *pondoks*. For example, many of the youths that attacked various security outposts in the south on 28 April 2004 were said to be recruited from religious schools such as Thamma Witthaya Islamic School in Pattani. Many of the leaders of the separatist group BRN Coordinate that have been arrested by Thai authorities are also teachers of the Thamma Witthaya School.

Some of the *pondoks* in southern Thailand may have also been used by the militants with linkages across the border in Malaysia. A Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM) member detained by Malaysian police told of a retreat in southern Thailand where he was taken to a *pondok* and met members of the Jemaah Islamiyah, Hamas and Hizbullah. There, they were listened to sermons about armed conflict and discussed how to undertake suicide bombings. Some were also taught how to handle C4 explosives and weapons like M-16 assault rifles and how to network with other militant groups. They were also given instructions about covert work, jungle training, and the importance of secrecy. According to him, the *pondoks* are run by Thai Muslims and Malaysians.<sup>212</sup>

At least one *pondok* in the south has been found to be used as a training ground for militant activity. Thai authorities raided the Jihad Witthaya Islamic school in May 2005 and found ammunition, evidence of military training, secret documents concerning an independent Pattani state, and Al-Qaeda training CDs. This has raised the alarm that despite indications that the southern Thai conflict is still very much a nationalistic struggle, there are signs that the southern Thai separatist groups may be jumping on the global jihad bandwagon.

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<sup>212</sup> Intelligence brief, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, as cited in Gunaratna, Acharya and Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*.

It is difficult to ascertain whether there has indeed been radicalisation taking place in these religious schools if one simply examines the curriculum of these *pondoks*. Most schools teach *Nahu* and *Saraf* (Arabic grammar), *Tafsir* (interpretation of the Qur'an), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Hadith* (Prophet's Tradition), *Auzuluddeen* (principles of religion or Islamic theology), *Balaghah* (eloquence) and *Tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism). There is nothing in the curriculum of these *pondoks* that suggests the propagation of radical Islam, or for that matter, separatism. However, some reports have emerged revealing that the radicalisation process appears to be taking place on a smaller scale, with the individual teacher or ustaz as the main source of propagation. According to the International Crisis Group, youths displaying the three key characteristics of piety, impressionability, and agility would be targeted. Agents (usually teachers) would recruit these youths into small groups (usually no more than five, but up to twenty), initially by befriending and inviting them to join discussion or prayer groups. Candidates were then sounded out in conversations about Patani history and those who appeared receptive to separatist ideology were invited to join the movement.<sup>213</sup> It is thus imperative that authorities closely monitor religious teachers. Some teachers have received religious education abroad in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Some are also believed to be foreigners. One of two Syrian nationals believed to be involved in the Hat Yai bombings in April 2005 and the car bombing in February 2005 was a former religious teacher.<sup>214</sup> While not all foreign-trained religious teachers (*asatizah*) or foreign *asatizah* are sources of radicalisation, there are some well-reported links that southern Thailand has to radical religious schools overseas. Examples include the Darul Uloom Islamia Binori Town and Jamia Khalid Bin Waleed seminaries in Karachi, Pakistan. Some southern Thai students are reported to be studying there and the schools are considered two of the most influential centres of hardline Deobandi Sunni Muslim ideology in the world. Many top ranking leaders of the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami (HUJI) are alumni of these schools.<sup>215</sup>

### **The Violence Today**

Through the examination of the literature that has emerged in southern Thailand thus far, one cannot come to the conclusion that the ideologies of the southern Thai

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p26.

<sup>214</sup> Anthony Davis, "Thai Insurgents Widen Their Target Base", *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, 12 April 2005.

<sup>215</sup> For an in-depth discussion of southern Thailand's links to foreign radical Islamic religious schools, see Gunaratna, Acharya and Chua, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*.

separatist groups have been radicalised, nor have they taken on the character of radical Islam. However, if we observe the developments with regards to the religious schools, one can detect a trend towards radicalisation. Teachers are returning to teach in southern Thai *pondoks*, armed with Deobandi or Wahabi teachings. At least one school is learning from Al Qaeda training CDs. Other schools are being used as meeting and training places for militant groups all over Southeast Asia. While these may not necessarily constitute a radicalisation of the type of Political Islam that has been entrenched in southern Thailand since the annexation of Patani, there are indications that if left unchecked and if the Thai government continues to overreact as they did in the Tak Bai incident, radicalisation will take place. The attacks in southern Thailand are beginning to show similarities with global jihad groups. From targeting Thai government officials, militants are now widening their target base to include civilians and foreigners. There has also been an increase in their level of expertise, with more people killed by their bombs. It may just be a matter of time before the southern Thai separatist groups become radicalised and join in the global jihad.

# **The Rise of Radical Political Islam in Southeast Asia**

## **A Malaysian Perspective**

Kamarulnizam Abdullah, Ph. D.

### **Abstract**

It cannot be denied that radical Muslim groups orchestrated the Jakarta Bombing and the Bali incident. The inevitable consequence of the incidents has led to a biased assumption of a direct relationship between Islam, radicalism, and terrorism. Although violent radical groups represent the minority of Muslim population in Southeast Asia, their impact and ability to cause political and economic instability has become a major concern. Their actions tends to create the perception in the non-Muslim world that Muslims all condone and share in the radical struggle. In reality, Muslims in Southeast Asia are known to be moderate and adaptable to global changes. Western powers, especially the United States as it leads the global campaign or war against terrorism, could be blamed for creating the fault-line between Islam and the West. Although strongly denied by the Bush administration, several policies and actions taken by the superpower have given the mistaken impression that its global campaign on terrorism is directed against Islam and its followers. The question thus arises – is it possible to create a balanced view of the rise of radical political Islam, especially in Southeast Asia? At present, the major focus in the current debates overemphasizes the notion of the “the threat of Islam”, while failing to analyze how the phenomenon of violent radicalism also poses a threat to Islam, i.e. to the Muslim community itself. Furthermore, to what extent does the debate on radical political Islam aggravate the misunderstandings of Islam as a religion as well as a political force? How do the political furors created by the Muslim radical groups put Muslims in the region in a quandary? How should Muslim dominated countries in the region respond to the rise of political Islam?

### **INTRODUCTION**

Three regional events have played major roles in shaping our thoughts about threats and regional stability in Southeast Asia. They are the bombings of Bali’s nightclub, the Jakarta’s Marriot Hotel and the Australian Embassy in Indonesia. The incidents highlight the fragility of regional security and the increasing concern over further threats posed by religious militant groups, which could subsequently have an

adverse effect on the socio-political stability. The Bali and Jakarta Bombings also pose security challenges to countries in the region. The region hence, has increasingly been identified as the “second front” in the United States-led War on International Terrorism<sup>1</sup>. The challenge also necessitates a departure from earlier approaches. It has been suggested that states in the region need to address the issue “as a functional matter...rather than as something that can be solved by threat or use of force”<sup>2</sup>. In other words, this type of threat requires cooperation and commitment from individual regional governments and a sense of regional common purpose to “strengthen their ties against any form of extremism and to isolate countries and societies” that provide havens for religious militant activities<sup>3</sup>.

It cannot be denied that the Jakarta Bombing and the Bali attacks were orchestrated by a militant Muslim group – Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI) – that has been listed as one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world. JI is said to be an extension of Al-Qaeda’s global network that uses Islam not only as a spiritual guidance but also as a political force to justify its campaign against the so-called the unjust western powers, particularly the United States. These groups resent Western dominance of the international system, which has led, they argue, to the victimization of Muslim communities all over the world in such places as Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Sudan. These radical Islamic movements also have been overwhelmed by their own limited ideological understanding and interpretation of Islam and, as a result, blindly condone political violence to focus the world’s attention to their political plights<sup>4</sup>. Perhaps they are successful in arousing certain sections of the international Muslim community sympathy that shares their ideas, but their radical acts have sent a different signal to the world community as a whole. Islam increasingly has been associated with radicalism and to some extent, terrorism. Yet moderate Muslim communities in the region have so far categorically rejected and distanced themselves from the dogmatic approach to Islam propagated by these radical Muslim groups.

Most critics argue that JI as well as the al-Qaeda represent only a small and distinct minority of Muslims worldwide<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, these groups have disproportionate impact through their ability to cause political and economic instability. As such, they become a major concern. Furthermore, they have altered the international community’s perception of Islam and Muslim people in a negative way. These two self-proclaimed “religious” terrorist groups have created a possible fault-line between “Islam” and the “the West”.<sup>6</sup> One may argue, however, that this notion fails to take into account

that the difference between Islam as a religion and Islam as a political force – a failure that has resulted in a perception that the Muslim world is aggressive, ideologically expansionist, and must be resisted.

Therefore, current analysis of the rise of radical political Islam (of the sort that has led to the emergence of radical Muslim groups) must take into account the complex socio-political structure of Muslim community across various parts of the world. Otherwise, it risks creating a myth of what Halliday calls “anti-Muslimism” -- a belief that there exists an Islamic threat to the world community<sup>7</sup>. This misperception has created to some extent a tendency even in a scholarly discourse, to equate Islamic radicalism, intentionally or unintentionally, with the broad “terrorist threat”. Hence, it is not surprising that attempts have been to discuss and lump other regional security issues such as piracy in the Straits of Malacca and separatist movements under the umbrella of the “terrorist threat”<sup>8</sup>.

The debate on radical political Islam has also put too much emphasis on the notion of the “the threat of Islam”, yet fails to analyze how the phenomenon also create a threat to Islam, i.e. to the Muslim themselves. Questions then remain, to what extent the debate on radical political Islam produced more misunderstanding about Islam as a religion as well as a political force. How political furors created by the Muslim radical groups have placed Muslims in the region into quandary? How Muslim dominated countries in the region response to the rise of political Islam? The paper will analyze the above questions.

### **Islam and Muslim Radicalism in Southeast Asia**

The process of globalization is held to be one of the major factors that contribute to rise of radical political Islam worldwide. Globalization has created, some critics argue, “social dislocation and uncertainty that the intensification of market forces has caused”<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, others focus on historical, cultural and contextual aspect in explaining the radical phenomenon<sup>10</sup>. Their argument follows from empirical data obtained from the protracted crisis in the Middle East indicating, first, that regions historically prone to conflict like ethnic conflict, military coupe, insurgencies, and revolution, are fertile grounds for political violence and militant group formation and, second, that regions experiencing political, economic and social instabilities also provide a green area for radical group formation. Such instabilities can take different forms including

disproportionate economic and political changes. Rapid growth or decline can affect different social groups through unemployment, underemployment, poverty and geographic displacement. Further, geographic displacement of a population could increase immigration of “unpopular” minorities hence it would heighten the majority-minority tension.

Another argument focuses on the widespread antipathy of authoritarian rule, domineering foreign presence and manipulation, and unequal income distribution in a particular society as possible explanations that lead to the rise of political and religious radicalism<sup>11</sup>. Others tend to emphasize the poverty and economic discrimination factors that could lead people to resort to violence.

In the Malaysian context, all these arguments appear to be unpersuasive. If one analyzes the membership character of Malaysian Muslim radical movements such as Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), the Al-Maunah and or the Malaysia’s JI, one discovers that members of those movements were in fact professionals and some of them were even Western educated. Such evidence may prove Atran’s argument that ‘poverty and lack of education per se are not the causes’ of the rise of religious terrorism<sup>12</sup>. Other factors, such as political alienation, discrimination, and insecurity may better explain why these professional joined the radical Muslim movements.

The rise of radical political Islam can also be understood in the context of *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reformation) movements during the pre-independence periods of Southeast Asian nations. These movement promoted the Islamic doctrine of allowing Muslims to live in isolation. They promoted the pristine and purity of Seventh century Islam as was subscribed by the prophet and his followers (the *salafs*). The movement was also known as the Salafi movement, more popularly known today as Wahabbism. One of the major creeds in this Salafi/Wahabbism is its rejection of *ijma`* (scholarly consensus) and *qiyas* (analogy) and also its rejection of the sources and methodological foundations of *ijtihad* (deriving qualified judgment) and *taqlid* (following qualified judgment). Salafi philosophy departed from the Muslim mainstream when it condemned the *umma* (Muslim community) and declared fellow Muslims unbelievers for their practice in *taqlid*. This minority section of Muslim community declared *jihad* (by emphasizing the physical war side of the concept) against not only the colonial powers but also Muslims who rejected the Salafi philosophy<sup>13</sup>.



Consequently, the Salafi philosophy has, to some extent, influenced the thinking and Islamic understanding of the mainstream Muslim region. The influence exists in different forms – neo-salafi, classicist salafi, radical salafi or peace salafi movement – each representing a different degree of adherence to the Salafi philosophy. The neo-Salafi movement, for instance, is associated with the Islamic-based independent political movements such as the debates between the Kaum Muda (the Young Faction) and Kaum Tua (the Old Faction) in the early formation of local Malay parties in the then Malaya (later Malaysia) in the 1920s and 1940s. The neo-Salafi movement is more homegrown and adaptable to local politics environments although the idea to create *daulah Islamiyyah* (the sovereignty of Islam) is the basic foundation of any type of Salafi movement. To neo-Salafis, the normal political process is a legitimate means to achieve its political objectives. Radical salafi is more closely associated with the current political philosophy of Wahabbism, which has made it appeal to the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Lasykar Jihad, Front Pembela Islam, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, Jamah Ikhwah al-Muslimin Indonesia and Hizb al-Tahrir Indonesia<sup>14</sup>. The radical salafi assertion of black and white Islam has inevitably created myths about Islam and its followers, especially in the aftermath of September 11 incident.

The most common myth about Islam created by the Salafi movement is that it is viewed solely as a religion. In this sense Islam is no different from other major religions, which “espouse certain clear doctrines, exists as a system of belief about the supernatural and related question of morality, destiny and meaning”<sup>15</sup>. Yet in reality Islam is not just a creed or supernatural beliefs. Islam is in fact a total and unified way of life, both religious and secular, it is a set of beliefs and a way of worship; it is a vast and integrated system of law, it is a culture and a civilisation; it is an economic system and a way of doing business; it is a polity and a method of governance; it is a special sort of society and a way of running a family; it prescribes for inheritance and divorce, dress and etiquette, food and personal hygiene. It is a spiritual and human totality, *this-worldly* and *other-worldly*<sup>16</sup>

Moderate Muslim dominated countries in the region, like Malaysia and Indonesia, persistently argue that Islam as it is practiced in the region is far different from that practiced in other parts of the world. It is also “...far more complex and diverse than generally assumed, and therefore need an understanding that reflects this”<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, Islam is also, like other major religions in the world, open

... to various and varied interpretations. These interpretations, which in terms of political action can be called the operationalisation of the concept of Islamic polity, differ greatly depending upon the political and social contexts in and the historical juncture at which they are so operationalised. They also vary depending upon who - person or party - is the medium through which such operationalisation takes place.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, it is imperative to say that Islam as it has been practiced in the Middle East does not reflect Islam as a whole. Islam is not only a religion but also a culture<sup>19</sup>. That's why to understand the particular Muslim society; one has to understand the social and cultural settings.

Another myth is that the current radical political Islam is a reflection of Islam itself painting Islam as the major threat to contemporary civilization. Huntington's thesis tends to strengthen this argument<sup>20</sup>. Other major scholarly debates also tend to perpetually focus on the rise of Islam as an emerging security challenge, without understanding the fact that there is a great difference between dogmatic Islam and interpreted Islam<sup>21</sup>. Dogmatic Islam refers to Islam as a given religion with sacred text and instructions for moral behavior and piety, whereas interpreted Islam is, as argued earlier, the operational side of Islamic polity, which opens for interpretation based on given time and social as well as cultural milieu.

The inevitable consequence is that the current view on terrorism conveniently "upgrades" nearly all radical Muslim groups in the region to terrorist status. There is a belief that the Southeast Asian region is a comfortable place for Muslim radicals to expand their operations<sup>22</sup>. Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) in Indonesia, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines, the New Bersatu in Thailand to name but a few, have been labeled a terrorist organizations although history has shown that the groups have a long political struggle for self determination and political rights against their government. In the southern Thailand case, it cannot be denied that Islam has been a major ideological factor behind the separatist struggle given the large population of Muslim in the area. Islamic identity is the natural bonding factor to unite Muslim minorities in the area. Nonetheless, as Liow argues, "... the primary concern should not be the activities of terrorist groups, important and disconcerting though their existence, in the region may be not more so with why a sociopolitical environment that may easily facilitate their activity exists..."<sup>23</sup> The region, in fact has largely been neglected over

time by the authorities, and “the current crisis is a direct repercussion of this state of affairs”<sup>24</sup>.

Skeptics have also expressed their reservations concerning the prevalent assumption of clear links not only between Islam and political radicalism, but also between Muslims and terrorism. Dr Mahathir, for instance, argues that:

[t]he terrorist, if they are terrorists and in many instances they are not, are labeled Muslim terrorists. Terrorism by others, by ethnic Europeans, by intolerant Christians and Jews, and by Buddhists, is never linked to their religions. There are no Christian terrorist, or Jewish terrorists, or Buddhist terrorist or Orthodox Christian terrorist...”<sup>25</sup>

The questions remains of how to correct this imbalanced view? Who should responsible for creating a more responsive understanding about Islam to avoid possible clash of civilization to become a reality? There might not be any simple answers to those questions, but a better understanding of the current international locus and power politics, facilitates a better understanding of the reality of the situation.

### **Muslim Radicalism and the Regional Response to the American Global War on Terrorism**

When the United States was "attacked" in the September 11 incident, the superpower's responses were swift. President Bush launched what he called the Global War on Terrorism and warned friends and foes to join its campaign. The famous quote – either with us or against us- set a new tone in the international political arena. The United States also vowed to fight terrorism at home and abroad through multiple operations including diplomatic, financial, investigate, homeland security, and humanitarian actions<sup>26</sup>.

The swift US response to terrorist attacks has also sent mixed and confusing signals to the world especially to the Muslim world. The superpower established a list of the so-called the rogue-states that it deemed to be a threat to the global stability. The majority those states identified by the Bush administration are Muslim countries, i.e. Syria and Iran (North Korea is the other state), creating a widespread perception that the United States was actually against Islam and the Muslims. At the same time, the fact that the majority of terrorist groups identified by the State Department are Muslim radical groups further confirms some skeptics' argument. The United States' one sided support

to Israel in the Middle East crisis and its unilateral war against Iraq on the pretext of Iraq's failure to observe the Non-Proliferation Treaty and its pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction further place the superpower in a very difficult position to seek global support on its campaign against terrorism.

In Southeast Asia, the United States has received full support from its regional allies particularly the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore. Others, especially the Muslim dominated countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, have proven quite reluctant to openly declare their support. Given the domestic political sentiments, these countries have to play their cards carefully. They have to be seen as serious in wiping out radical Muslim groups that have been identified as terrorists, yet at the same time they have to be constructively critical to the United States' policies in the region. Despite some occasional political rhetoric and exchanges between Malaysia and the United States, for instance, Malaysia works closely with the superpower in its global campaign against terrorism<sup>27</sup>. Malaysia, as one of the Muslim-dominated countries in the region, needs superpower support to contain the local and regional Muslim radicalism. At the same time, the United States could not work alone. The superpower also needs assistance from countries in the region to foster strong cooperation in combating terrorism and to thwart Al-Qaeda's Southeast Asia networking<sup>28</sup>. Hence Southeast Asian countries have to work closely with the superpower for closer collaboration in eliminating those religious extremisms in their countries.

Moderate Muslim countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, were constrained by the growth of the radicalization of political Islam in their countries. Malaysia and Indonesia, which are known as pro-West, must limit their use of political language of Islam to avoid upsetting their Western allies<sup>29</sup>. At the same time, they also have no choice but to react to the rise of radical political Islam either by using suppression methods, which are politically suicidal, or by becoming more Islamic. By becoming more Islamic, these Muslim governments have given more space for Islamic movements to expand politically and socially. This political gamble has not produced the expected outcome but created more problems for these governments. Muslim governments have limited options but to use Islam as political tool to gain political support from people.

The above discussion also explains the dilemma faced by Muslims and also the Muslim governments in Southeast Asia. I have argued elsewhere that all the bombing attacks worldwide that were orchestrated by Muslim terrorist movements have produced

great psychological impact not only to individual Muslim but also to Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia<sup>30</sup>. At the individual level, Muslims in the region as well as in the world who do not share the radical sentiment propounded by Muslim radicals must react and realign themselves. They must rethink not only the fundamental and true teachings their religion and but also how they could be integrated in the world community. In a similar vein, difficult questions have haunted ordinary Muslims whether as to whether to subscribe to the calls made by these Muslim extremists? Are they becoming less Muslims if the idea of an Islamic-based state and community does not materialize?

The religious learned people, known as the *ulama*, have been unable to come out with a convincing *fatwa* (religious sanction) condoning the radical idea promoted by those Muslim terrorist movements who used the holy Koran and *hadith* (the saying and the deeds of the prophet Muhammad) to justify their actions. The major contentions of all radical Muslim movements focus on: first, the charge that all Muslim governments are politically and socio-economically corrupted by aligning themselves with the Christian West; second, that such corruption is due to the failure by the Muslim governments to uphold *syariah* (Islamic law) based on the Koran and *hadith* and; third, that the only way to clear the impurity is to call for *Jihad Fi-Sibilant* (Holy war in the name of God) by using force in order to set up an Islamic state based on what was allegedly envisioned by the prophet Muhammad. Muslim radicals argue that in the current unjust world, they are engaged in a struggle of the good against the evil. They have a role to “please the perceive commands of deity” by using force and violence since they consider themselves to be unrestrained by secular values and moral judgments<sup>31</sup>.

Muslims who adopted a moderate stance can also become a victim or target of the radical Muslim groups. They risk being viewed as *kafr* (infidel) for their failure to subscribe to *syariah* law. Although Westerners appear to be the major targets of radical Muslim groups in the region, there is possibility that moderate Muslims could become the next major target as it has been shown in many incidents in South Asia and the Middle East.

The dilemma also exists at the state level among the Muslim dominated countries. On the one hand, Muslim countries have the upper hand in curbing radical religious elements in their societies without having fear of being scrutinized by major powers and the Western community. Some countries use the United States-led Global War against

Terrorism campaign to justify their actions against Islamic groups seen as threats to national security. Preventive laws that were once condemned as draconian with hidden political motives are now seen as the most effective tools to contain the spread of terrorism and religious radicalism. On the other hand, by increasingly using centralized and coercive approaches to undermining the radical religious groups, these governments could subsequently undermine the very objective of dampening the influence of international Muslim terrorism in the region<sup>32</sup>. A repressive approach will create more opposition and political alienations among the radical groups thus could prompt them to pursue their objective against the Muslim government, which have been seen as an extension of Western power's neo-colonialism agenda.

Hence, it is argued that the United States' global campaign in War Against terrorism cannot achieve its objectives without having a consistent support from regional Muslim dominated countries that are also threatened by the rise of radical political Islam. The United States must also ensure that regional Muslim dominated governments receive strong political support since Southeast Asia is still facing an unpredictable future and struggling with political and economic problems. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation, not only struggles with an ailing economy but with a wide range of radical Islamic groups, many of which have close ties with militant groups worldwide. Some Indonesian radicals may have links with international terrorism<sup>33</sup>. Jemaah Islamiyah or JI has regional links in Singapore, the southern Philippines and Malaysia. In Singapore, members of the group were arrested for planning to attack US, Israeli and British embassies and strategic transportation areas. In Malaysia, several members have been arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and many of them are still on the run.

Dealing with the current threat of Muslim radicalism also poses new challenges for regional governments. If the strategy used during the culmination of communist threat was to win the hearts and minds of the people who support the movement, the current strategy needs more than that since the current treat of Muslim fanaticism involves religion (seen as scared), identity and legitimacy. The question has been raised whether regimes in power have the political legitimacy to label certain Muslim organizations as terrorist. The decision by the Malaysian government, for instance, to outlaw an influential Muslim organization, the Darul Arqam, received criticism since the decision was considered politically motivated. The Malaysian government argued that the group was a threat to the national security for its serious doctrinal controversies pertaining to Islamic teachings. Yet some critics argued that government's decision was a response to Arqam's

dissenting voice that would challenge government's self-proclaim status as the guardian of Islam in the country.

### **The Radicalization of Political Islam: Impact and Response**

The end of Cold War provided opportunities for political democratization. The era of globalization, according to neo-liberals, will extend the scope and deepen the content of democratization. Statism has been, according neo-liberals, the fundamental stumbling block to the process and development of democratization. The belief that globalization supports economic growth and political freedom has compelled the post-socialist and the post-authoritarian economies, from Eastern Europe to East Asia, to adapt market-oriented neo-liberal economic reforms. Yet the September 11 incident has raised questions concerning the willingness of governments in the region would become more accountable and transparent. The way some governments in the region have dealt with religious terrorism, for instance, has produced more questions rather than answers. Some pro-liberal movements question government credibility in proving the existence of al-Qaeda associated of movements in their country. Malaysia and Singapore, for instance, used Internal Security Act (ISA) in handling their terrorist threats but gave few clues as to the extent of the problem. Yet others emphasize concerted regional cooperation to undermine the influence of regional radical Muslim groups.

Nonetheless, there are possible obstacles to this kind of regional cooperation. One is the fact that regional Muslim groups have overcome national and geographical barriers by maintaining deep and long running ties with one another through their shared fundamentalist goal<sup>34</sup>. The second obstacle is that their clandestine, elusive "cells" are disperse throughout everyday-life, places, functions and business hence rendering an Afghanistan-style military campaign in the region impractical. The third obstacle is that these groups had forged partnerships with al-Qaeda long before authorities beginning unearthing the scale of their transnational reach.

The final obstacle, which is the most important, is the fact that America has sometimes over-reacted to threat of religious terrorism. The US has launched an all out war on terrorism in the wake of the September 11 incident. Yet many Southeast Asian countries see the US's single minded pursuit on terrorism as only one among several key security issues<sup>35</sup>. Malaysia, for instance, argues that the real threats to regional stability emerge from the problems of injustice, poverty and underdevelopment. Countries in the

region are struggling in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis, with Indonesia being affected the most. This important regional player is still in the process of democratization, repairing its economy and preventing the country from fragmenting.

The involvement of US troops in the Philippines could have backlashed for governments in the region because war against “terrorism must be understood as political and ideological war for the hearts and minds of the borderless, transnational Muslim states, the *ummah*. The major challenge to the United States is firstly, it should not cast its “struggle against terrorism as a struggle against Islam”<sup>36</sup>. The *Newsweek* report that US interrogators allegedly desecrated the Al-Koran during the interrogations of Al-Qaeda members has raised further condemnations from the world. It triggered riots in some Muslim countries, such as in Indonesia and Pakistan, and widespread demands that the US government apologize for the mischief. Although the weekly magazine retracted the report and made an open apology for the inaccurate information, the damage in fact has been done. Secondly, its campaign on terrorism could undermine the effort made by countries in the region to overcome their domestic problems. Indonesia has been blamed for its slow and hesitant commitment to the war against terrorism but one has to understand the problems faced by President Bambang Susilo. A major or all-out crackdown on Lasykar Jihad or Jemaah Islamiah for example would create political uproar among Indonesian people and politicians. Hamzah Haz is, for instance, known to be close to the upper echelon of Lasykar Jihad. In addition, given series of natural disaster such as the tsunami, earthquakes, and volcano eruptions, the Susilo government might have to divert its attention to more pressing needs of the Indonesian people.

Furthermore, US involvement in the southern Philippines has strengthened the skeptics’ belief that Uncle Sam intends to play a major role in the region. Critics argue that the region was left alone when countries in the region were grappling with the Financial Crisis of 1997. The United States was not interested in lending a hand to the region, and Thailand, one of its major allies, was allowed to crumble economically. To this day, people in Thailand can not forgive Uncle Sam’s failure to help them during the crisis. Yet terrorism has raised US interest in the region. For the critics, the region is important to the region only to serve its national interest and to ensure that its global war on terrorism would achieve its objectives. This skepticism also explains why the Indonesian and Malaysian government, given a large population of Muslim in their country, were quite cautious in endorsing US plan to wipe out Al-Qaeda links. While



these two countries supported the plan, they rejected US's all out war against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan since, they argued, it won't solve the larger picture of terrorism.

It is imperative that the United States understand the regional limitation in overcoming the radical Muslim threat. Failures to understand those limitations could hamper regional efforts to support the United States campaign. The focus should not be solely on the radical Muslim groups that have been labeled as terrorist but on the indirect political strategy based on strengthening the organic capacity of governments in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia to wipe out radical Muslim groups network within their own territories.<sup>37</sup> Although governments in the region will accept some elements of such indirect strategies, problems remain that need to be attended to. How can the US help governments in the region to improve the quality of their governance when US intentions are met with popular skepticism? Although even US critics agree that there should be more accountability and transparency in governance in the region, but counter terrorism strategy can not be seen as a unilateral imposition of American values in the region. The region has diverse values and norms that US should take into account.

Financial and military assistance are elements of US support that deserve serious thought. Furthermore, the United States should play a proactive role in encouraging regional cooperation on counter-terrorism measures. Helping the Southeast governments to improve their quality of governance is another indirect strategy important to the US. At the same time, the United States should remain sensitive to the local political culture. The remarks by US charge d'affaires in Manila, Joseph Mussomeli, that Mindanao risks becoming into another Afghanistan situation is a case in point.<sup>38</sup> The remarks triggered diplomatic protest from the Aquino government, which demanded the United States Embassy apologize. Such diplomatic uproar is damaging and can be avoided if the United States takes care to discuss such sensitive political issues only in closed-door discussions.

The Malaysian government has managed to contain the spread of terrorism domestically faces the potential spill-over effect of terrorist activities from neighboring countries. Political developments in southern Philippines do not look promising and Sabah, Malaysia's close neighbor, might confront an unexpected eventuality similar to that of the Sipadan-Ligitan situation. Indonesia presents similar political challenges. The link between KMM and JI, which share the goal of establishing a revolutionary Islamic state in the region combining Malaysia, Indonesia and southern Philippines, and the

possibility of another Abu Sayaff Group strike on the Sabah shore have forced Malaysia to prepare for this new kind of security threats.

Malaysia must be internally strong. Only a country with strong societal cohesion, economic growth rates, political stability and defense capabilities can overcome this challenge. This argument however does not mean that a strong country is automatically capable of facing this new kind of threat. September 11 has shown that despite being a superpower, the United States was not prepared to deal with this new threat. What is most important is that the regime in power and the Malaysia people must form a partnership to prepare physically and mentally for this kind of problem.

Another strategy is to undertake serious attempts to alleviate domestic political division in this country, especially on religious issues. Religion should not be used for political convenience since history has shown that radical elements might seek to turn the opportunity to their advantage. Allowing religion to be used for political justification opens the door to other interested groups to exploit religion to serve their own political agenda. The emergence of radical religious groups in the region is a manifestation of this problem. These groups claimed that they were impatient with the slow progress of the government and Islamic-based opposition party to implement Islamic law in the country. But the crux of the issue is that religion should not be used as a political tool.

Furthermore, there is a need for better typologies to explain the complexity of home-grown Muslim radical groups, and the emergence of transnational linkages both among them and with global radical movements<sup>39</sup>. Juergensmeyers offers three common factors that contribute to the rise of Islamic militancy across various cultures worldwide.<sup>40</sup> According to him, Islamic militant groups usually first, reject the “liberal values of secular institutions and blame society’s decline on the loss of religious aspiration”; second, refuse to accept “boundaries of secular society which keeps religion a private observance and not the public sphere; and third, seek “to restore religion as central to social life”<sup>41</sup>. These three common factors, then, could also actually explain the rise of Islamic militancy in Malaysia.

Removing the threat by crushing the groups and throwing the members into jail is only a short-term solution. Efforts now should shift toward not only to restructuring the system – education, morality and values, religion – to promote a more liberal but culturally strong generation but also to overhaul the governmental and political system to

be accountable, transparency, and free of corruption. At the same time the international actors – states as well as non-states, and particularly the media – can play a constructive role in presenting fair assessments of the current phenomenon.

## **CONCLUSION**

The current debate on the rise of radical political Islam has ignored the crucial fact that too much emphasis has been placed on the notion of “the threat of Islam” rather than “the threat to Islam (Muslims)”. Even recently, for instance, the Queen Margrethe of Denmark, in her autobiography, expresses her concern over the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and calls for “opposition” to Islam since, she argues, the people of Denmark cannot reconcile themselves to the Islamic threat any longer<sup>42</sup>. The statement shows that misjudgment and misconceptions about Islam still exist among the Western leaders who fail to realize that the phenomenon also creates a threat to Islam and the Muslim people in general. The Muslims themselves, have become victims of circumstances. The Madrid Attacks and the Bali Bombings were the work of radical Muslim groups that have been labeled as terrorists. The majority of the rogue states identified by the Bush administration are Muslim countries. Furthermore, the continuing threats of global terrorism in the twenty-first century have been associated with Islam and the Muslims.

But, what is more important is that the United States must ensure that its campaign against terrorism in Southeast Asia does not impinge upon the religious and political sovereignty of countries in the region. The superpower faces a delicate challenge of not casting its struggle against terrorism as a struggle against Islam since it would create further problems for the regional countries especially the Muslim-dominated population. Although those Muslim majority countries in the region such as Malaysia and Indonesia need strong political support from the United States for their own internal struggle against local radical Muslim groups, these countries, at the same time, realize that Muslim radicalism (and to some extent terrorism) is only one among several key security issues. Hence, there are limitations to the supports given for the US Global War on Terrorism.

## ENDNOTES:

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2 Castro, Renato Cruz De, “Addressing International Terrorism in Southeast Asia: A Matter of Strategic of Functional Approach”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 26, No 2 (2004), p. 196.

3 Ibid.

4 Kamarulnizam Abdullah, Limiting the Threats of Ideological based Terror Groups: Lessons to be learned from Malaysia, in R. Ragaini (Ed.). *The Science and Culture Series, The Cultural Planetary Emergency: Focus on Terrorism*, World Scientific, New Jersey, London, Singapore, Beijing et. al, 2004, p. 40

5 Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003, p. 1

6 Fred Halliday, *Islam & the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, I.B. Taurus, London and New York, 1995.

7 Ibid. See particularly chapter 4.

8 See Kamarulnizam Abdullah, Piracy and Security in the Straits of Malacca, Paper presented at the *International Conference on Malaysia and Sino-Malaysia Relations*, Xiamen University, People’s Republic of China, April 6-7, 2005

<sup>9</sup> The argument was made by former Thai Foreign Minister, Surin Pisuwan during a conference in Hong Kong in early September of 2001. Please refer to *Harvard Asia Quarterly Internet Edition* at [www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~asiactr/haq), visited on June 17, 2002; See also Kamarulnizam Abdulah, “Islamic Militant Movements and Communal Conflict in Malaysia”, in *Militant Islamic Movements in Indonesia and Southeast Asia*, edited by S. Yunanto et. al. Ridep Institute, Jakarta, 2003, p. 225.

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- <sup>11</sup> Katz, Mark N. “Osama bin Laden as Transnational Revolutionary Leader”, *Current History*. February 2002, p. 81.
- <sup>12</sup> Scott Atran, “Mishandling Suicide Terrorism”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 27(3), 2004, p. 69.
- <sup>13</sup> See *The Doctrine of ahl Al-Sunna Versus the Salfi Movement* at <http://www.sunnah.org/publication/fajr/fajr.htm> (accessed 16 April 2005).
- <sup>14</sup> Azyumardi Azra, Gerakan Islam Militant di Asia Tenggara, *Analisis CSIS*, Vol. 33 No 1, 2004, pp.96-99.
- <sup>15</sup> Fred Halliday, 1995, op cit p.2.
- <sup>16</sup> Jansen, G. H., *Militant Islam*, Pan Books, London & Sydney, 1979, p. 17.
- <sup>17</sup> Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, Penerbit UKM, 2003, p. 5
- <sup>18</sup> Mohamed Ayoob, *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion*. London: Croom Helm, 1981, pp. 535-6.
- <sup>19</sup> Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, op.cit.
- <sup>20</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1998.
- <sup>21</sup> See for instance the misleading title by Andrew T.H. Tan, The Rise of Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia: An Merging Security Challenge”, *Perspective*, 2003.

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<sup>22</sup> Further discussion please see Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia Crucible of Terror*, Lynne Rienner,

Boulder, Colorado, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Chinyong Liow, “The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimension”, *Studies of Conflict and Terrorism*, 27(6), p. 544

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, A Speech delivered at *the Seminar on the Role of Islamic Civilization in Fostering Inter-religious Understanding*, organized by the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), Kuala Lumpur, May 25, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> *The New Straits Times*, March 13, 2003

<sup>27</sup> Kamarulnizam Abdullah, Malaysia’s Responses to the Asia-Pacific’s New International Order, Paper to be presented at *the International Symposium on Asia-Pacific and a New International Order: Responses and Options*, University of Adelaide, Australia, 27-28 January 2005

<sup>28</sup> Castro, Renato Cruz De, *op. cit*, p. 194

<sup>29</sup> Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, *op.cit.*

<sup>30</sup> See Kamarulnizam Abdullah, Malaysia’s Responses to the Asia-Pacific’s New International Order, *op.cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Kurth Cronin, “Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism, *International Security*, 27(3), 2002/03, pp. 41-42

<sup>32</sup> See Suzana Kadir, “Mapping Muslim Politics in Southeast Asia after September 11”, *Pacific Review*, Volume 17, Issue 2, 2004: 199-222

<sup>33</sup> “Analysis: Indonesia Islamic Radical”. *BBC New Homepage edition*, [http://wwwnews.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid\\_1657000/1657514.stm](http://wwwnews.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/asia-pacific/newsid_1657000/1657514.stm) (accessed on June 17, 2002)

<sup>34</sup> The preliminary findings of the project can be accessed through CDI homepage at <http://www.cdi.org>

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<sup>35</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review* (FEER), June 13, 2002, p. 24

<sup>36</sup> Satu Limaye, “Minding the Gaps: The Bush Administration and U.S.-Southeast Asia Relations”. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. 26(1), p. 80.

<sup>37</sup> Barry Desker and Kumar Ramakrishna, “Forging an Indirect Strategy in Southeast Asia”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 25:2, pp.161-176

<sup>38</sup> *The New Straits Times*, April 30, 2005, p. 30

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Tan, op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God, The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, University of California Press, Berkeley, New York, and London, 2000, pp. 6-9

<sup>41</sup> These factors have been succinctly discussed by Lauren Langman and Douglas Morris in their article entitled “Islamic Terrorism: From Retrenchment to Resentment and Beyond, Internet edition at <http://eee.angelfire.com>, visited 24 June 2003.

<sup>42</sup> AFP Report, *Utusan Malaysia*, 15 April 2005, p. 17





**PART IV**  
**TOWARD COOPERATIVE ANALYSIS AND**  
**CAPABILITY-BUILDING**



## **TOWARD COOPERATIVE ANALYSIS AND CAPABILITY-BUILDING**

In his opening remarks to the conference, Dato Zainal Abidin Mahamad Zain, Director General of the SEARCCT outlined a set of basic principles that should underlie any attempt to build cooperative approaches to countering the threat from terrorism in Southeast Asia. First, there remains a need to arrive at an internationally agreed upon definition of terrorism that is culturally and religiously neutral. Second, it is time to move beyond interdiction of terrorists and terrorist plots toward identifying and countering the root causes of terrorism and its ideological support. Third, once these root causes are identified, it is necessary to develop comprehensive approaches that deal with all dimensions of the problem. Fourth, cooperative mechanisms and approaches should not be linked to democratization. Fifth, countermeasures must be truly regional and cooperative because terrorist organizations and the social, economic, and political conflicts that give rise to them do not respect national or even regional boundaries. Sixth, Southeast Asian regional cooperation on countering terrorism must be designed in keeping with its long-standing security culture of strict respect for the sovereignty of individual nations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, all definitions, concepts, policies and strategies must be crafted in a way that does not associate terrorism with any particular country, ethnicity, or religion. To link the counter-terrorism dialogue to “Islamic extremism” would not only artificially constrain the threat but would be counter-productive. By playing into the hands of extremists who want to spread the belief that the United States is conducting a war against Islam, linking terrorism to Islam makes it politically difficult for otherwise willing partners in the war on terror to cooperate openly.

The roundtable discussions held during the conference highlighted the broad base of academic, journalistic, law enforcement, and government expertise that exists across Southeast Asia. In addition, a number of regional institutions exist that dedicate themselves to understanding the terrorist phenomenon and devising effective counter-terrorist strategies. At present, however, much of this rich knowledge base is compartmented within states and disciplines. Moreover, there is much knowledge out there that could prove useful to designing effective counter-terrorism approaches but may be missed because it lies outside the realm of “terrorism studies.” What is needed is a mechanism for searching out these valuable sources of knowledge and insight and facilitating cooperative, interdisciplinary research within Southeast Asia. Such a cooperative mechanism would prove a valuable intellectual “force multiplier” for all the nations involved and would move the international understanding of the causes and

appropriate responses to the rise of terrorist violence much farther than any one state or institution could achieve in isolation.

### **The Way Forward**

It has become a universally recognized, if not always welcome truth that our world has become more complex at all levels. Technology and global economics throw us all closer together. They can promote understanding and accelerate the pace of positive contact and interaction, and that is undeniably a good thing. Unfortunately, they can also create whole new sources of potential misunderstanding and conflict. The fact that the people of the world now share so much of their technical culture can lull us into the misimpression that people across the globe see things pretty much the same way and want pretty much the same things.

When it comes to understanding and developing cooperative approaches to responding to the global terrorist threat, each nation in the international community has come to its own understanding of the nature of the threat the world faces, and each tends to generalize from its limited perceptions and contexts. In so doing, the community of nations is missing the opportunity to reap the many benefits that can come from incorporating the insights and interpretations of others who look at the same events and challenges through very different – but no less accurate – lenses.

Political, cultural and rational differences have always complicated the relationships between states in the international system. In the best of times, they complicate cooperative and collective action. At the worst of times, they can precipitate tension, crises, and wars. But in today's world, national security and the security and stability of the international system depend not only on the ability of governments to manage their interactions and resolve their differences peacefully. Security now also depends on our ability to respond to threats from "super-empowered individuals" as well as groups with various ideological and social agendas or special interests who attempt to influence and shape the international system on behalf of a broad range of noble and not so noble agendas. These individuals and groups come to the table with their own historical and cultural contexts, perceptions, perspectives, and prejudices. Such individuals and transnational groups can now advance their political and ideological agendas by using international media, communication technologies like the internet, and our increasingly porous national and economic borders to by-pass governments and appeal directly to the opinion, emotions, and psyches of populations. Those with violent agendas can use these same mechanisms to find like-minded (or merely expedient)

partners, build operational and financial networks, acquire more and more advanced technologies and weapons of mass destruction, and commit acts of terror. And as we are all learning, both as individual nations and as an international community, the capabilities we developed to keep the peace between nations in the past have distressingly little utility against many of these shadowy, transnational, non-state threats.

In no realm do the differences in perception and context constitute greater barriers than in the struggle to build cooperative approaches to countering non-traditional threats, including terrorism. The United States believes it is engaged in a Global War on Terror. US national security strategy and its interaction with its many allies and partners are firmly rooted in the assumption that our way of life is under attack by an internationalist, militant, ideological threat dedicated to weakening and, perhaps, destroying our democratic system and economic and cultural power. In the American view, the center of gravity in the war on terror is al-Qaida, in particular, its iconic leaders Usama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri. This perspective is reasonable considering the global range of US security commitments and the nature of the attacks and attempted attacks that have been made against US citizens and interests both at home and abroad. But this “globalist” perspective also leads to a tendency among US analysts and policymakers to see other kinds of terrorist threats from local, regional, and criminal organizations as derivative of and peripheral to the broader al-Qaida threat. The assumption is that if we cut off the head of the snake – namely al-Qaida and Usama bin Laden – the boa constrictor of Islamist militancy will loosen its grip on the rest of the Muslim world. Without guidance from the center, the smaller regional groups will lose their ideological inspiration, sources of financial and material support, and perhaps most important, their “strategic guidance” and collapse.

From the perspective of our regional partners in the global war on terror, however, the problem looks very different. While few would denigrate the severity of the threat al-Qaida presents, other nations tend to see the threat from terrorism in their own local and regional, social, and historical contexts. In South and Southeast Asia, for example, political violence conducted by militant Islamist and Muslim separatist groups long predates the birth of al-Qaida – or the birth of Usama bin Laden, for that matter. Terrorism in many countries is the product of long-standing local conflicts with deep historical roots that are certainly complicated by the presence of al-Qaida but which would likely continue to fester even if the US succeeded in wiping the global jihadist movement off the face of the earth. These regional partners in the war on terror would like to see the United States broaden the focus of its counter-terrorism strategy. In their

view, the US should coordinate with them and take their interests to heart in responding to *all levels and dimensions* of the terrorist threat, not only the ones that relate directly to al-Qaida's campaign against Americans and American interests.

Moreover, they are concerned that cooperating with the US in pursuing the common goal of defeating terrorists does not end up being an ideological "Trojan Horse" for them. Most would like to see US counter terrorism strategies delinked from any broader agenda of political, military or economic reform, and all want assurances that any common counter-terrorism strategy would respect the sovereignty of individual nations. More important, they believe they must be free to pursue *their* wars on terror even when those conflict with US priorities. "You are with us or you are against us" is too blunt – and ultimately insulting – a posture to take in building counter-terrorism partnerships.

Regional partners in the war on terror would also like to see the US re-conceptualize its counter-terrorism strategies and develop a more nuanced political approach to the terrorist threat. They see a need to broaden the agenda beyond the single ideological threat of militant jihadist terrorism, to acknowledge that the root political, economic, religious, and social causes are complex and have very deep historical roots. Such an understanding would, moreover, shift the war on terrorism away from the current prejudice that terrorism is a religious rather than a political problem. In the view of many regional powers, the Western and US focus on militant jihadism as a "monolithic" threat obscures many important features of the problem of terrorism, including the role of family ties, the importance of local political and economic agendas, and the role of small-groups psychology and social networks in spreading radical ideologies and recruiting potential terrorists. The current al-Qaida centered approach also runs the risk of overlooking the evolutionary nature of terrorist groups and the threat they pose. New splinter groups of existing organizations like al-Qaida and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) are constantly emerging. These new groups are often even more radical than their parent organizations, but they are too small and dispersed to show up on global terrorist watch lists until it is too late. That is, until they have carried out a terrorist attack. Finally, focusing counter-terrorism approaches too closely on one dimension of the problem, plays into the hands of militant extremists in their efforts to build public support by creating the impression that the United States, secular regimes in Muslim nations, and their Western and Asian allies are at war against Islam.

The US global war on terror has been extremely successful in disrupting al-Qaida's ability to do business and conduct terrorist operations. Reasonable estimates suggest that as much as a third of al-Qaida's senior leadership has been arrested or

otherwise “neutralized.” Regional partners have been equally successful in rounding up key leaders of regional jihadist groups. JI’s operations in Southeast Asia, for example, are in some disarray and Laskar Jihad in Indonesia has disbanded. This is all, of course, good news. But focusing on arresting key leadership and breaking up terrorist operations in the planning stage is not an adequate long term approach. Arrests at the top push the initiative further down into the organization, disperse decision-making and planning, and lead to the emergence of smaller splinter groups.

Eventually, the focus of counter-terrorist strategies must shift from interdiction to prevention. Militant organizations will only be truly defeated when they are so ideologically and politically marginalized that they cannot find a safe environment in which to operate or a body of willing recruits. For that to happen, all the nations that are committed to neutralizing the threat from violent militant organizations must work together to develop a better understanding of the root causes of terrorism and terrorist sympathy, resolving the local and regional conflicts that often give rise to terrorism, identifying those individuals and groups that are most susceptible to militant ideologies, and devising approaches to countering toxic ideologies and narrowing the social space within which they can spread. Building a global anti-terrorist environment is, in short, a global project.

In the interest of building truly cooperative, international counter-terrorism approaches, the Institute for Defense Analyses has teamed with the Southeast Asia Center for Counter-Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, the Institute for Defense and Strategic Studies in Singapore, the Counter Terrorism Centre in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the Philippine Center for Terrorism Analysis and Research to create a Council for Asian Terrorism Research (CATR). The guiding principle of the council is that we can transform the diversity of perspectives into a great strength in devising new approaches, building new capabilities, and building a global anti-terrorist environment. The impetus for creation of the Council grew out of a recent Conference on the Landscape of the Terrorist Threat in Southeast Asia held in Kuala Lumpur in April of this year. The conference included representatives from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and the United States. It is a model that we hope will expand into other regions in the years ahead.

The purpose of the Council is to promote regional regional research on terrorism and counter-terrorism, drawing equally on unique strengths and perspectives of each nation in the region. We seek to cast the broadest possible methodological net to find knowledge and expertise that might contribute to understanding and responding

effectively to the factors and environments that give rise to violent extremism. The Council will provide formal mechanisms to promote lively, interdisciplinary discussion of terrorism and counter-terrorism among scholars, government officials, policy analysts, religious leaders, and law-enforcement professionals. The primary mechanism for facilitating discussion will be bi-annual conferences and workshops to address key trends and share information, study findings, and individual insights as well as to identify topics and themes for future research. IDA, as the institutional representative of the US, intends to play a facilitating rather than a guiding role, preferring that the Southeast Asian member institutions define the analytical agenda. These conferences will produce papers, publications, and policy briefs for dissemination to policy makers and government leaders to influence Track 1 decision-making throughout the region. The ultimate goal, however, is to foster informal relationships among all those in academe, government the military, the media, religious establishments and schools, private research and philanthropic institutions, and non-government organizations in the region who think about, research, and worry about these problems. Such relationships will, we hope, promote on-going communication, dialog, and information sharing and cooperative policy-making on these important issues.

Deciphering the many dimensions of the threat from militant political and religious groups, not to mention identifying the most effective means of countering violent ideologies and building local, national, regional, and global anti-terrorist cultures and attitudes is well beyond the scope of any single country or discipline. There is not one global war on terror, there are many wars on terror being conducted at all levels – international, national, local, social, and within mainstream religions. The establishment of organizations like the CACTR will be crucial as we move into the next phase of the war on terror and shift our attention from interdiction to prevention. In fact, such organizations can be instrumental in broadening the scope of national strategies and capabilities among all the nations engaged in the war on terrorism and other non-traditional security threat. By drawing on the multi-disciplinary approaches of scholars, think-tanks, academics, NGO workers, journalists, and of course, government, military and law-enforcement officials, such “virtual think tanks” can draw on the full range of knowledge and insight into the nature of militant ideologies, the structure of terrorist organizations, and the environment in which they operate to build more effective capabilities and strategic approaches in the future. And by drawing on such a broad range – of methodologies and national perspectives – such institutions can contribute not only to the problem of interdicting terrorist activity but also to building a global anti-terrorist



environment in the future – a world in which terrorism is universally condemned as an illegitimate means of achieving political, economic, or social change.



## **Appendix A**

### **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES**

**MOHD KAMARULNIZAM ABDULLAH** is currently a Visiting Lecturer at the Universitas Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, Indonesia and an Associate Professor at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. He received an American Associate Degree from Indiana University (1988), a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Utah (1990), a Master of Arts A in International Relations from the Australian National University (1992), and a Ph.D. from Lancaster University (1998). Dr. Abdullah has been a Visiting Fellow on Asian Security at the United States Department of State and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. He has also been a lecturer at the Oxford Diplomatic Council, the Senior Royal Police Academy of Malaysia, and the Malaysian Defense College. He is the author of numerous articles and book chapter and is author of the book *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia* (2002).

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*Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds, 1948-1958*, was published by RoutledgeCurzon in February 2002. He has co-edited with Andrew Tan a book, *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies*, published by Eastern Universities Press in January 2003. He is also co-editor with Tan See Seng, of *After Bali: The Threat of Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, published by IDSS and World Scientific in January 2004.

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ed., *Globalisation and its Counter Forces* and “New Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” in  
Damien Kingsbury, ed., *Security Issues in Southeast Asia*.



## **Appendix B**

### **THE COUNCIL FOR ASIAN TERRORISM RESEARCH**

The Council for Asian Terrorism Research (CATR) is a symposium of government, academic, and research institutions dedicated to providing systematic ways of promoting and sharing regional research on terrorism and counter-terrorism. Its goal is to draw on the unique strengths and perspectives of each of its member institutions and countries to enhance both understanding of and responses to the rise of terrorism and political violence. The CATR is founded upon the principle that by promoting and sharing research, it is possible to draw upon the diverse expertise and perspectives that exist across the region to develop new approaches, enhance existing capabilities, and build integrated and cooperative efforts to counter terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region and other regions that directly affect its security. The Council fulfills a number of important functions:

- It provides formal and informal mechanisms for promoting an open dialogue among scholars, officials, and law enforcement professionals;
- It encourages information sharing as a means to improve the effectiveness of both national and international counter-terrorism activities;
- It promotes research on topics relating to terrorism and counterterrorism for use in policymaking, planning, and training;
- It establishes links with institutions and organizations in other regions for the purpose of information exchange and scholarly dialogue.



**Appendix C**  
**JOINT INTERAGENCY COORDINATION GROUP FOR**  
**COUNTERTERRORISM (JIACG/CT)**

Bridging the gap between the Department of Defense and our national and local agencies has never been more important than it is today. In the aftermath of 9/11, the United States Pacific Command (PACOM) took the joint interagency C2 structure to a new level by forming the Joint Interagency Coordination Group for Counterterrorism, or JIACG/CT. The mission of the JIACG/CT is to fuse interagency capabilities into operations in the PACOM area of operations (AOR) to destroy terrorism in the Pacific theater. Thirty personnel taken from across the PACOM staff coordinate with organizations such as the Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Agency, Treasury Department, Defense Intelligence Agency, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and others. Together, this offense-oriented C2 element serves to synchronize and operationalize the Theater CT Campaign Plan, shortening the intelligence-to-action response time. It accomplishes this task by fusing the mosaic of information relevant to an emerging threat and then rapidly coordinating either a military or civilian agency response. JIACGs are now common at most unified commands

A second post 9/11 JIACG formed for the purpose of anti-Terrorism/Force Protection is a Joint Rear Area Security Coordinator or JRAC program, implemented to facilitate coordination between military components, local, state, and federal agencies, host nations, and, in some cases, commercial facilities with an intention to secure critical infrastructure, assets, and personnel that support the mission.

There are currently five geographically focused C2 cells located in Guam, Hawaii, Alaska, Japan, and Korea. The JIACG model shows great potential for other capabilities-based applications such as improved intelligence sharing and information operations. PACOM is especially fortunate to have their service components co-located with us in Hawaii. Each is fully engaged and, with an Area of Responsibility that spans

52 percent of the earth, they are the principle reason PACOM can fulfill its mission. They are essential to PACOM's warfighting planning and execution.

**Appendix D**  
**THE SOUTH EAST ASIA REGIONAL CENTRE FOR**  
**COUNTER-TERRORISM (SEARCCT)**

Southeast Asia has been a peaceful and socio-economically successful region for many decades. However, since September 11, no region in the world is spared from terrorists' threat. Southeast Asia cannot allow terrorists to disrupt its growth and prosperity. It needs to maintain its peace and stability as to ensure a continuous growing foreign investment environment and a vibrant economy. In order to remain as a region of peace and stability, there is a need for Southeast Asia's solidarity and united response to combatting terrorism. Hence, in November 2002, Malaysia decided to establish the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Kuala Lumpur.

The establishment of SEARCCT has received endorsement from the 36<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 16-17 June 2003. Upon its launch on 1 July 2003, SEARCCT operated at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia in Putrajaya. On 13 May 2004, it relocated to its permanent address in Kuala Lumpur. The Centre is headed by a Director General and has a total staff of 37. The Centre is fully supported by the Malaysian Government and operates under the purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, other interested parties could provide assistance in organizing courses, funding participants, providing expertise, and other related expenses. At this juncture, SEARCCT has received positive responses from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Italy, Australia, France, Spain, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, and the European Commission. SEARCCT is not involved in operations nor does it serve as an intelligence agency. In this respect, SEARCCT is a centre for training in prevention of terrorist activities and management of post-terrorism situations.

SEARCCT aims to be a centre of excellence and a distinguished institution in Southeast Asia. To achieve this, there is need to have focused objectives and strategies. SEARCCT's are as follows:

1. SEARCCT will primarily focus on training and "Capacity-Building." This is to enhance the capability of the agencies and participants from both Malaysian and other countries of Southeast Asia.
2. SEARCCT will create public awareness towards countering the threat of terrorism, through continuously organizing courses, conferences, seminars,

sustained education programs and other related activities with universities, related agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other interested parties.

3. SEARCCT will also maintain its own database of information on terrorist groups in the Southeast Asia region and other parts of the world. This database will be constantly updated.

## **Appendix E**

### **GLOSSARY**

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AHAI	Al-Harakatul Al-Islamiyya
ARNO	Arakan Rohingya Nationalist Organization
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
ATTF	Anti-Terrorism Task Force (Philippines)
BRN-C	Barisan Revolusi Nasional Coordinate
CPM	Communist Party of Malaysia
COCIS	Cabinet Oversight Committee on Internal Security (Philippines)
DDII	Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia
DI	Darul Islam, Islamic State Party (Indonesia)
DND	Department of National Defense (Philippines)
FPI	Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defense Front)
FKAWJ	Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wa al-Jamaah
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Free Aceh Movement
GMIP	Gerakan Mujiheddin Islamiyah Pattani
HISPRAN	Haji Ismail Pranoto
HTI	Hizb al-Tahrir Indonesia
IEC	Islamic Executive Council
IIC	International Information Center
IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organization
JAMI	Jamaah Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JMA	Jemaah Mujahidin Anshorullah
JS	Jemmah Salafiyah
KMM	Kumpulan Militan Malaysia
KNU	Karen National Army
KP	Kumaran Pathmanathan (Shanmugam Kumaran Tharmaligham)
LJ	Lasykar Jihad
MAK	Afghan Service Bureau
MCFF	Mujahideed Commando Freedom Fighters
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front

MILF-SOG	Moro Islamic Liberation Front – Special Operations Group
MMI	Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Council of Indonesian Jihad Fighters)
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NICA	National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (Philippines)
NII	Negara Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic State)
NPA	New Peoples Army
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama
OMA	Office of Muslim Affairs (Philippines)
OPM	Organasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Organization)
PBB	Moon and Crescent Party, Indonesia
PKS	Justice and Welfare Party, Indonesia
PKI	Indonesian Communist Party
PNP	Philippine National Police
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party), Indonesia
PULO	Pattani United Liberation Organization
RSO	Rohingya Solidarity Organisation
RSRM	Rajah Sulaiman Revolutionary Movement
SBY	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
SHA	“Strategy of Holistic Approach”
SSA	Shan State Army
TII	Tentera Islam Indonesia
TWG	Technical Working Group



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